Elliott B. Gose, Jr

THE WORLD OF THE Irish Wonder Tale

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF FAIRY TALES

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For my mother and father

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Preface

THIS BOOK has grown out of a belief in the importance of fairy tales as simple narratives with deep meanings. These tales come from an oral tradition that we have lost: they were handed down in Europe over hundreds of years by tellers some of whom forgot details and confused plots, others of whom always told a tale exactly as their fathers had told it to them, still others of whom combined or added incidents with great artistry. Some tales when recorded were therefore weak and incoherent in spots, while some are beautifully articulated and strike the sympathetic reader as profound.

I have chosen Irish wonder tales for two reasons, because they are less well known than European fairy tales and because they are often just as compelling. In fact the two traditions not only have a common heritage; as I shall show in the Prologue, fairy tale and wonder tale can actually be two names for the same type of narrative. The Irish tales grew in an agrarian society with roots in a pagan past – a lineage that is still traceable in surviving manuscripts of Celtic culture. My interest in these roots means that I shall introduce several chapters with a relevant tale or ritual that helps to suggest the animistic way of thinking that also informs wonder tales. Since I am not dealing with direct influences, these introductory elements will be drawn not only from Celtic but from Indo-European and even North American Indian sources as well.

What the pagan themes introduce in each case, however, will be a wonder tale. In my discussion of it the focus will be on the psychological dimensions of its structure. By psychological I mean psychoanalytic, but not with a heavy accent. I provide a brief outline of Freud's views along with a sample psychoanalytic approach to a wonder tale in chapter five. I do the same for Jung in chapter eight. My approach leans more towards

Jung than towards Freud, but I have sometimes deliberately refrained from bringing in a Jungian category when I found my explication of it growing too long. Instead, I have consciously chosen to approach each tale as my sense of its particular structure and theme seemed to dictate.

But 'my sense of it' is obviously influenced by my belief that there are unconscious, compensatory images, promptings which seek conscious recognition. I believe that this condition is the result not only of the repressions of culture but of the human situation. These tales appeal to that part of us that wants to integrate the facets we are more or less aware of in ourselves, that believes truth and love can be reconciled at some higher level than we have yet reached, that strives through darkness for identification with light. These aims are so grand, so simple, and so evanescent that they are difficult to define intellectually.

When I chose these tales, it was less out of a conscious preconception of what the 'message' would be than out of an attraction which I felt for them. Once committed to them I learned from them, sometimes in unexpected ways. While believing that the tales speak to the deeper levels of the self, I have approached them as literary works. Unlike the folklorist, I have tried to find not the most typical but the most compelling version of a particular tale. Wonder tales depend so much on plot that I have necessarily been concerned with the way incidents are put together and with the development of certain patterns of actions and character relations. Although I shall be applying some of the more approachable insights of structuralism, the reader should not expect a close structuralist analysis of these tales.

My aim has been not only to use those means which would help me to get the most from each tale but to provide the reader with a sample of various approaches. The book is thus at once introductory and personal. I have retold the tales before discussing each because they are not well known and because it is important for the reader to experience each one. I believe that, like dreams, wonder tales leave their impression whether consciously remembered or not, and if remembered whether analysed or not. My interest does lie in analysis, but I have aimed at appealing not only to those who take a more or less professional interest in wonder tales but also to those who will be encouraged to see that the tales can have an effect, even though the listener or reader may not be specifically aware of possible levels of meaning.

Because this book is intended as a guide to the study of these tales, I have provided a descriptive table of contents which allows the reader to move directly to a particular tale or theme or approach. I should, however, say a few words here about the kinds of approach to be found in the chapters ahead. I have already mentioned the psychoanalytic, which I consider quite close to the literary. For instance, I see the happy ending as the successful completion of a narrative integration process: the revelation of an initial imbalance, the development of a conflict, and the resolution of the difficulty.

Phrased in these general terms, the process may also be approached through three other related disciplines: comparative mythology, comparative religion, and the cross-cultural studies of anthropology. I make use of such insights in chapter four and the introduction to part two. More particularly, of course, I provide some notion of the fascinating findings in the area of Celtic culture, religion, and myth – in the Prologue, the introduction to part one, and at the beginning of chapters one, six, and ten.

The scholarly study of these tales began in the nineteenth century with the investigations of the brothers Grimm. I offer indications of the method and results of their successors in the Prologue and Appendix A. A modern scholar more concerned with the tales themselves is Max Lüthi, whose conclusions I rely on throughout and whose insights I develop particularly in the Prologue and chapters eleven and twelve. Also in the twentieth century there has developed a more formalistic study of folk tales. An important pioneer was Vladimir Propp, whose approach I illustrate in chapter two and in Appendix B. A more contemporary theorist is the structuralist Tzvetan Todorov, whose approach I discuss in chapter seven.

But all of these disciplines are adjuncts to my own literary approach. I am interested in how the narratives work, how characters become involved in conflicts, how plots embody themes, and how readers are implicitly involved in a process with psychological consequences. These consequences constitute the important humanizing function of the tales.

In the Prologue I emphasize that the Irish wonder tale was usually addressed to an adult audience. Hence the tradition was weighted away from narratives about children, such as the story of Hansel and Gretel. This does not mean that children do not enjoy wonder tales. Quite the contrary. But since my aim is to convince adults of the importance of the

tales, I have left out any comment on their relevance to children. Anyone familiar with Bruno Bettelheim's study *The Uses of Enchantment* will be aware of the kind of appeal they would have to younger readers.

Because they were usually told by men, wonder tales almost always have a man as the hero, as do most international tale-types, of which the Irish tales are variants. Perhaps as a man I respond strongly to them partly for that reason. But I have noticed that women do too. I believe that both men and women find them alive and pertinent because these tales deal less with social roles than with psychic development and because our overt biological sex is complemented by its covert opposite. Dreams, fantasy, and the narrative forms of such fantasies – myths, romances, and folk tales – represent an attempt to make us more aware of internal psychic needs and abilities. We tend to overlook some of our inner nature in our focus on the outside reality that is both such a natural and such a conditioned part of our social lives. It is out of a belief in the importance of this compensatory function of narrative fantasy that I chose the subject of this book.

For help in pursuing this study I am primarily indebted to my wife Kathleen, whose creative suggestions often turned difficulty into strength. Her refusal to see through opaque sentences both aided me in clarifying my style and kept me focused on my real subject. I am also grateful to a discussion group to which we belonged; for almost a year we read and talked about Irish and other wonder tales, including many dealt with in this book. Kieran Kealy gave me valuable suggestions for keeping the reader informed about what this study does and does not attempt to do. Doris Kiernan kindly took time to translate Andre Jolles on the riddle. Patrick O'Neill helped me with the pronunciation of Gaelic names. Nina Thurston not only typed accurately but also implemented a creative suggestion about the typography. This book is dedicated to my mother and father as a small return for the many gifts they gave me as a child, gifts such as the reading of fairy tales. I must finally express my gratitude to Cynthia Renwick, who helped me to regain an appreciation of fantasy and a trust in the integrating power below the surface of the mind.

Textual Note

A list of the sources of the wonder tales I have summarized precedes the notes; references to these sources by short title and page number are included in the texts of the tales. Subsequent references to secondary sources cited in the notes appear by short title and page number in my text.

The main sources of typologies of structures and tales are discussed in the appendixes. Pronunciation of Gaelic words is indicated in the text in parentheses upon their first appearance and is also given in Appendix C.

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PROLOGUE
The Folk-Tale Tradition in Ireland and Europe

ALTHOUGH my involvement with fairy tales and fantasy goes back to childhood, my acquaintance with Irish tales came later, growing initially out of an interest in W.B. Yeats. I bought his collection of *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* (as the Modern Library titled it) with anticipation and was disappointed that so many of the stories were merely what the title promised, tales about fairies and other such creatures. Like many people who are attracted to 'fairy tales,' I really wanted tales of adventure, involving magic and transformation. These are called *märchen* in German and variously labelled in English. I find the term *fairy tales* inadequate not only because it suggests they are about fairies but also because it implies they are only for children. A better term is *folk tales*, but it covers other types of oral tale as well. In this study, therefore, I shall refer to the kind of tale I am dealing with by another accepted term, the *wonder tale*, with its appropriate suggestion of wonderful or magic adventures.

I was pleased to discover that one tale printed by Yeats was an excellent example of the kind of wonder tale I was looking for. Briefly, it goes like this. Conn-eda is a prince forced by his stepmother to go on a quest for some golden apples growing in a kingdom under a lake. The prince gets advice from a Druid and is helped in his adventures by a shaggy pony, which eventually he has to kill. The horse is then transformed into a man, the brother of the king of the other world. After the brothers are reunited, the one who is king gladly gives Conn-eda the apples. When the queen sees her stepson returning with them, she kills herself. The apples are planted; a tree grows up from one, and the kingdom becomes as fertile as the other-world realm from which the fruit has come. Besides the human interest, conflict, and adventures which fiction has traditionally offered, this tale includes the wonderful, in the object of the quest and in the

transformation of the horse. These motifs are also the focus of evocative themes in the tale.[1]

Reading this tale again recently, I was struck less by the marvels I remembered than by the heavy-handedness of the telling. As Yeats records, the story was told by a Gaelic speaker to Nicholas O'Kearney, who translated it into English and printed it in the *Cambrian Journal* in 1855.[2] Despite some Gaelic phrases, that version of the tale has an elaborate style that is the opposite of the simple, direct language of indigenous tales. Like others of his time (and before, and since), O'Kearney presumably felt obliged to elevate the language of the peasant who told it. This need was especially strongly felt in Ireland, where the triumph of English among the civilized Irish had reduced Gaelic to a language spoken only by backward members of the lower classes. Not until the revival of nationalism came to include the teaching of Gaelic in its program was Ireland ripe for translations that tried to retain the directness and simplicity of Gaelic idioms and the oral style.

Douglas Hyde, the president of the newly founded Gaelic League, provided a focus. Yeats admired Hyde's direct translation of Gaelic tales and even printed a couple in his collection, but most of the stories Yeats chose were literary versions, sometimes even couched in stage Irish. This defect is mainly attributable to the lack of any other kind of tale in print, but it is also true that Yeats's taste was more literary than folk at that time. It was not until 1898 that he met Lady Gregory and began to help her to collect material directly from the peasants in the west of Ireland.

A growing respect for Gaelic tales and tellers became manifest within two years of the publication of Yeats's anthology. Two important collections appeared in 1890. First was *Myths and Folk Tales of Ireland*, translated by an American, Jeremiah Curtin, who had learned Gaelic for the purpose. Second was *Beside the Fire*, in which Douglas Hyde provided translations of twenty tales and included six tales in Gaelic, along with a valuable introduction. In 1893 Hyde's friend William Larminie translated another group of tales, *West Irish Folk-Tales and Romances*. In 1894 Curtin published an even larger collection, *Hero-Tales of Ireland*.

When we consider the kind of tale that was found in Ireland, we enter a world quite different from that usually associated with Grimm's *Fairy Tales*. We do, of course, encounter many Irish versions of tales found throughout Europe and first collected by the brothers Grimm. But we find only a few examples of some of the best-known of the Grimm tales:

'Hansel and Gretel,' 'Snow White and Rose Red,' 'Rapunzel,' 'The Goose Girl,' 'The Frog King,' 'Sleeping Beauty,' and 'Beauty and the Beast.' To be more specific, we find various tales with sleeping princesses but only ten recordings of 'Sleeping Beauty.' Considering that well over forty thousand versions of various folk tales have been collected in Ireland, ten is a very small number.

What these tales from Grimm have in common will be clear if we reflect that all of them are discussed by Bruno Bettelheim in his study *The Uses of Enchantment*. As a child psychiatrist Bettelheim approaches fairy tales with great sensitivity to the ways in which they speak to children. His elucidation of the kinds of problem they treat and the reassurances they offer are compelling and convincing.[3] But his legitimate concern with the importance of fairy tales to childhood leads him to pick those popular tales which hardly appear in Ireland.[4]

There are several possible reasons for this anomaly. Like England, Ireland as an island was often isolated from the continent. According to the diffusionist theory, this would explain a great deal: many European fairy tales seem to have begun in India or the Middle East and to have been carried by word of mouth over hundreds of years into Europe. While the early Celts probably brought many to Ireland, gaps in contact may then have prevented the Irish from receiving tales which developed later on the continent. However, several of the Irish tales I shall be discussing do have German counterparts recorded by the Grimm brothers. German 'fairy' tales and Irish 'wonder' tales are therefore only two different sets of a type of folk tale known in many countries.

In Germany the brothers Grimm came upon these tales through nursemaids and old wives, who told them to children more than to adults. The situation was quite different in late nineteenth-century Ireland. There the men (and a few women) were the proud bearers of an active oral tradition. Since the tales were often told long into the night, young children were usually neither present nor welcome during these sessions.[5] As reported by James Delargy, the tellers were unable to read or write and spoke only Gaelic; they were well known in their neighbourhoods and valued as guests during the winter nights. Often one such teller in a locale would be 'a conscious literary artist,' taking 'a deep pleasure in telling his tales' in 'clear and vigorous language' ('Gaelic Story-teller' 184). Of the several kinds of tales told by Gaelic speakers, I shall focus on the wonder tale as told for adults, for non-literate peasants who wanted to be enter-

tained, to escape their physical poverty for imaginative wealth and power, but who were also possessed, as Delargy underlines, of considerable 'aesthetic sensitivity and intellectual curiosity' (198). Another attraction the tales would have had for teller and listener was the opportunity their content and form offered to exercise the heart and the head. In such stories the emotions are touched both by human kindness and by valour; in the best of them the spirit is also touched by a narrative which offers a symbolic movement towards psychic integration.

A difficulty might be thought to lie in the way of any symbolic investigation of these stories: I shall be discussing English translations, the Gaelic version of which has usually not been recorded. Certainly this makes any close stylistic analysis impossible. But the limitation is offset by an odd circumstance: it has been acknowledged that the best of the Irish wonder tales are those collected in the late nineteenth century by Curtin and available only in English.[6] The resolution of this anomaly lies partly in Curtin's having gone to the peasants in the late eighties and early nineties, when their culture had been less undermined by outside influences. By the nineteen-twenties and thirties, when a formal effort was made to record stories in Gaelic, their telling was less common and the tellers less honoured. But the main reason for the success of Curtin's English versions is that an oral tale that is strong in one language will usually be so in a direct translation to another.[7] The secret is the simplicity of such tales.

The so-called 'epic laws' enunciated by Axel Olrik will give some indication of why translation might not damage a tale's intrinsic quality. As listed by Stith Thompson in his classic study *The Folktale* (see Appendix A), there are nine of these laws, six of which are relevant here. One is the frequent three-fold repetition of incidents in an oral tale. This repetition provides suspense and makes the incidents easier to remember. Another is that there are rarely more than two characters active at the same time in a tale, and these are usually contrasting (for example, hero and villain). In addition, 'the characterization is simple. Only such qualities as directly affect the story are mentioned: no hint is given that the persons in the tale have any life outside' (456). Even the style is simple, no attempt being made to introduce variety of phrasing or description. In other words, simplicity is the rule which makes for ease of listening and absorbing, of remembering and telling.

Unlike the saga or the epic, the wonder tale makes little attempt to mirror the reality of the external world. This means that its characters are

not portrayed in any depth. As Max Lüthi puts it, 'The principal actors in the fairy tale are neither individuals nor character types, but merely figures, and for just this reason can stand for a great many things. One can view them as representatives of cosmic or psychic forces just as easily as real people.'[8] To develop this last point, I shall be calling on Lüthi, Bettelheim, and other investigators frequently in the chapters ahead.

There is another important characteristic of wonder tales: they tend to focus on the concrete. The hero will not encounter many things – objects or creatures – but those he does meet invariably play a part in the action: a special horse that will take the hero where he has to go; a well from which he must get healing water; a loaf of bread that has his mother's blessing and that he may be asked to share on the road; a sword that he must gain; a scarf that gives him great strength. To describe such objects and events, wonder tales evolved an unadorned style which tends to use few rather than many adjectives.[9] As Max Lüthi claims, the refusal 'to describe unessential details gives the European fairy tale its clarity and precision' (*Once upon a Time* 50). This characteristic obviously makes easier the task of translating such a tale. In fact, Stith Thompson insists that 'the dissemination of tales is not greatly hindered by language frontiers' (*Folk-tale* 435).

Claude Lévi-Strauss has suggested why many tales in an oral tradition managed to keep their plots intact while being passed through several languages on their way from, say, India to Ireland. In his seminal essay 'The Structural Study of Myths,' Lévi-Strauss contrasts myth with poetry on this score:

> Poetry is a kind of speech which cannot be translated except at the cost of serious distortions; whereas the mythical value of the myth remains preserved, even through the worst translation. Whatever our ignorance of the language, and the culture of the people where it originated, a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader throughout the world.[10]

This provocative statement raises several issues. I am not so sure as Lévi-Strauss that a myth from one culture will be recognized as such in all others. Perhaps part of the difficulty would be solved by a definition of myth. A common one would be 'a story that explains something important to a people, about their relation to the gods or the environment or the values of their culture.' I offer this definition not to test Lévi-Strauss's

statement but to make it clear that myth differs in *intent* from the wonder tale with which I shall be dealing. Yet in its shape and in its motifs, a wonder tale is often very similar to myth.

Max Lüthi claims it is the way in which the wonder tale handles those motifs that differentiates it from other archaic narrative forms. It simplifies character relations and 'siphons off all three-dimensionality from objects and phenomena':

> The uniform style of the folktale sets into immediate juxtaposition the worldly and numinous (this-worldly beings and other-worldly beings), the high and the low (princesses and peasant lads), the familiar and the alien (the hero's brothers and total strangers) within a single form. In this way the isolation and sublimation of the folktale's constituent elements create the opportunity for their 'free' interplay.

This freedom is in contrast to both the myth and the saint's legend: 'Myths trace the essential, constantly recurring processes of life back to a unique, fundamental event, an event that becomes destiny.' The saint's legend 'invests everything with meaning.' But in the wonder tale '– perhaps for the first time – the world finds poetic expression.' Lüthi insists, however, that the wonder tale 'does not want to invent things that do not exist and never could exist in the real world; rather, it sees reality become transparent and clear ... It believes that the world is truly the way it perceives and portrays it to be.'[11]

In Christian Europe the line between the secular wonder tale and the religious myth was more clear-cut than in the native cultures of North America, since Christianity became the sacred myth of the people without displacing the profane tales that had flourished under earlier religions. Despite its pagan grounding, the European wonder tale does differ from primitive-culture tales with similar motifs. In North American Indian tales, for instance, the hero may either fail or become a god, as we shall see in chapter three. But the hero of a European wonder tale never becomes a god and rarely fails in his quest. One of my aims in this book will be to demonstrate, despite such differences, the number of themes and motifs from the pagan past which were still alive in the wonder tales of the late nineteenth century. For the moment I shall simply assert that because myth also demonstrates most of the narrative qualities already laid down for the wonder tale, Lévi-Strauss's generalization that translation need not distort can be applied to both types of narrative.

Most readers do not have any difficulty in responding to wonder tales. Their being set in an indeterminate past among simple folk acting on recognizable impulses allows an immediate empathy. In the case of many of the Irish tales, the style of the translation is also appealing, especially when it is done by someone fluent in both languages. Many Gaelic idioms contribute vitality to an English translation. Both children and adults like to listen to the tales, and the person reading them needs only a slight acquaintance with Irish English to slip into some of the delightful cadences. It would therefore be a bonus if I could provide a full translation of the tales I discuss. But because these tales would fill up a book by themselves, I have given a condensed narrative, quoting only enough of the translation to give a sense of the style and to provide a basis for later discussion. Since the narrative structure makes a strong appeal to the reader's imagination, such condensation should be sufficient to provide the sympathetic reader with the experience of the tale.

To encourage readers to turn to the fuller version where they can, however, I will contrast my retelling of a segment of 'The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks' with Curtin's translation in the easily available *Myths and Folk Tales of Ireland*. I have reduced one incident to the following: 'The fisherman went home sadly to tell his wife. After the parents had lamented the loss of their son for several months, the father decided to go in search of him. One evening he came to the hut of an old woman who was able to direct him to the house of the Gruagach.' In Curtin's translation, this incident is told in a more leisurely and engaging manner:

The fisherman went home with a heavy and sorrowful heart, and the old woman scolded him all that night till next morning for letting her son go with the Gruagach a second time.

Then himself and the old woman were lamenting a quarter of a year; and when another quarter had passed, he said to her: 'I'll leave you here now, and I'll be walking on myself till I wear my legs off up to my knees, and from my knees to my waist, till I find where is my son.'

So away went the old man walking, and he used to spend but one night in a house, and not two nights in any house, till his feet were all in blisters. One evening late he came to a hut where there was an old woman sitting at a fire.

'Poor man!' said she, when she laid eyes on him, 'it's a great distress you are in, to be so disfigured with wounds and sores. What is the trouble that's on you?'

'I had a son,' said the old man, 'and the Gruagach ... came on a day and took him from me.'

'Oh, poor man!' said she. 'I have a son with that same Gruagach these twelve years, and I have never been able to get him back or get sight of him, and I'm in dread you'll not be able to get your son either. But to-morrow, in the morning, I'll tell you all I know, and show you the road you must go to find the house of the Gruagach.' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 87–8)[12]

The engaging style can be said to come straight from the Irish peasants. Those who helped Curtin make his original translations knew Irish English as well as Gaelic.

After publishing his first volume of folk tales, Curtin made additional visits to Ireland in 1891 and 1892–3. The tales he collected were published in the New York *Sun* during 1892 and 1893. Those that were not then republished by Curtin in *Hero-Tales of Ireland* (1894) were finally gathered in 1944 by Delargy and published in Dublin as *Irish Folk-Tales*. The wonder tales in this last volume are just as vigorous as those in the other two.

I have tried to indicate that such tales have a long heritage. Whereas most will have held their shape while travelling thousands of miles over hundreds of years, the odd one may have taken shape recently, deriving, as we shall see in the introduction to part one, from a medieval romance which in turn grew out of a Celtic myth. In either case, the plot was preserved both because it was exciting and because the success of the hero appealed to the spirit and emotions of the listener.

PART ONE

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Introduction

THE FIRST six chapters of this study will focus on the difficulties that face the wonder-tale hero and on the plot patterns that accompany his gaining of power. In doing so, they will include a look at the structure of wonder tales. Chapters two, three, and four will apply two closely related and helpful structuralist studies to several tales. Among other insights, one of these studies will provide a three-part structure based on the three tests which many protagonists must pass if they are to become successful heroes.

Another important topic to be developed is the ancient Celtic and medieval Irish background. I shall be introducing chapter one with a consideration of two Celtic customs and a medieval legend which have parallels in the wonder tale that will be the main focus of the chapter. This impressive tale, 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island,' will also allow me to develop in general terms some of my main contentions about the wonder tale, in particular the importance of the psychic-integration theme. That theme is connected with a third topic that will be important in this study, depth psychology.

The relevance of the psychoanalytic approach to wonder tales can be taken for granted because these tales are so obviously a form of fantasy. In this case, it does not matter whether we define fantasy as literature which is not governed by the reader's experience of how the world actually functions or as a kind of day-dream which reveals the dynamics of the psyche, its desires and fears, its frustrations and aspirations. My commitment to this general approach will be augmented in chapter three by a brief explication of Jung's theory of archetypes and in chapter five by an explicit outline of one aspect of Freudian theory.

Some further information about the Irish background of these tales is necessary before we turn to them individually. Particularly we need to have in mind how the tales fared in an oral culture, what relation they bear both to Celtic myth and to medieval Irish romance, and in what sense they should be called primitive.

Investigations in Ireland have provided interesting evidence which corroborates both observation and theory about the effects of an oral tradition on the shape of a tale. As in other countries, in Ireland the audience served as a check on the teller who confused incidents in a story. On the Aran Islands around the turn of the century, 'if a narrator attempted to alter such a story, his audience interrupted and corrected him.' Although newly acquired stories could be simplified or embellished, 'gradually they became standardized and the point reached where no one telling them could effect further alterations.'[1]

This process explains a seeming paradox, the historical stability of certain plots and types of tales and, simultaneously, the variation of tales and motif combinations. At the end of the last century, the labours of the Finnish school of scholars in tracing tales through space and time led, among other results, to the establishment of a list of tale-types. In 1910 these were formalized by the Finnish folklorist Anti Aarne. In 1928 his work was enlarged and translated into English by the American folklorist Stith Thompson in *The Types of the Folktale*. Between 1932 and 1936 Thompson produced, in another six volumes, his exhaustive *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. Although both of these titles contain useful information, Thompson's approach is not central for the kinds of analysis I shall be illustrating in the chapters ahead. Since, however, it can provide a framework for one kind of overview of wonder tales, I have included in Appendix A a list of the tales discussed in this book and the types they represent.

As it became clear in the nineteenth century that most of these motifs and types are hundreds (some thousands) of years old, scholars began to speculate about their relation to pagan religious beliefs. Thus Jeremiah Curtin, who collected the wonder tales considered in the first four chapters, hoped to find in the Irish oral tradition keys to the principles of Celtic religion. Although we cannot accept his theory today, I shall be demonstrating similarities in episodes and themes between the Irish tales he and others collected and older myths and tales.[2]

Men of earlier times believed that there were both good and bad incursions of the supernatural into our world. We tend today to take their

descriptions of such events as imaginings, as psychic projections or fantasies in one of the senses already discussed. Analysed from a psychoanalytic or a structuralist point of view, the many pictures of the supernatural world and its relation to ours show a pattern that is worth tracing. Whether we are looking at a myth, a saga, a legend, or a wonder tale, the point of focus is always contact with the powers of the other world. Such contact allows that power to come through into this world and thereby influence key events in the lives of the heroes of the tales. This influence is especially evident in such events as being born and dying (in the heroic sagas and legends) or finding a mate and a place in the world (in all the tales). Contact with the supernatural world either tests the mettle of the hero or comes about because the hero has already passed a test, in this world. In either case the other world is the means by which the hero's destiny unfolds, a destiny determined largely by his inner commitment to such values as humanity and steadfastness (especially in the wonder tales), honour and reputation (especially in the older tales), and resourcefulness and bravery (in both).

Since I am not making a case for a direct influence of the ancient tales on the wonder tales, I feel I should present some suggestions about why there are parallels between them. One reason could be that the Irish audience continued to have the same mind-set over the twelve-hundred-year period between the introduction of writing to the country and the end of the ninteenth century. Proinsias MacCana comments:

> The dimension of the supernatural, the otherworldly ... is never absent from Irish narrative. Modern anthropologists have commented on the deep and continual concern in Irish rural communities of, say, thirty or forty years ago with the inter-relationships between the two worlds, and there can be no doubt that this is one of the underlying continuities from primitive to modern Irish society.[3]

More specifically, research in Irish literature has shown the evolution of some fascinating connections between medieval and modern times. Alan Bruford, in his study *Gaelic Folk Tales and Medieval Romances*, presents evidence about the way the written romances entered the oral tradition. One of his preliminary conclusions is that 'only what is easy to remember and interesting enough to be worth remembering, has a good chance of being passed on' (167). This puts a premium on brevity and 'a strong

coherent plot line' (168). In Bruford's opinion, folk emendation, far from demeaning the literary value of the original manuscript, tended to improve it, since the medieval Romances were 'often long and rambling and sometimes dull' (168).

Having noted the importance of simplicity while looking at Olrik's 'epic laws,' we should not be surprised at Bruford's list of beneficial changes. The folk-tale version usually drops 'irrelevant motifs' to dramatize scenes merely narrated in the romance, to reduce the number of characters, to preserve 'precise chronological order' (no flashbacks), and 'to knit the story together with small details' (235–6). This last tendency, to have every character or event play a significant part in the story, is an important method of giving meaning to the plot and is connected with the 'over-determined' world of the wonder tale. Bruford concludes that the result of wearing away the excesses of the romance into the form of a folk tale is 'aesthetically far more satisfying than the original form' (235). This conclusion leads Bruford to generalize that international wonder tales could also 'have reached their modern standard form ... logically constructed and compact ... from an original form' which was neither, and could have done so 'in the space of a few centuries' (248). While many students of folk tales would be upset by this conclusion, I am not. We have already seen, of course, how many wonder tales could have held their standard form for several hundred years in cultures free from influence by written versions.

Another scholar working from a different point of view has come to a similar conclusion about the tendency of folk tales to simplify. James Carney values the written tradition more highly than the oral but notes that 'paradoxically later Irish tales tend on the whole to be more primitive than the earlier.'[4] This fact can cause scholars to mistake a later version for an early one, as both Carney and Bruford warn.[5] Besides providing a reason for scholarly caution, their discovery may also lead in a more positive direction: if wonder tales look primitive, I suspect it is because they are so. While agreeing that wonder tales are not myths, I would suggest that the minds that created both were rooted in societies with similar world-views. I am not suggesting, however, that a tale be valued because it corresponds to some supposed archetype. In reading different versions of the same type of tale, I have noticed that each one tends to develop its theme in a different way. From a literary point of view, the question is how thoroughly it is developed, how pleasingly the parts are

put together, and how much this form speaks to the sympathetic imagination.

In my vocabulary, *pre-literate* is an honorific term, although this position does involve me in a paradox: I am analysing the printed tales of a non-literate culture. Those who went to the peasants and recorded such tales put a high premium on fidelity to the spoken word. Without in any way finding fault with their justifiable emphasis on such fidelity, I have to record my own experience: the tale that is best for listening is not necessarily best for reading or for literary analysis.[6] And yet my definition of literary effectiveness is quite similar to that which can be drawn from Bruford's list of the improvements folk-telling made to the medieval romances. This is not to say that I disapprove of subtle character delineation or flashbacks or long narratives. I enjoy all of these in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English novel. But there are other virtues besides these, and wonder tales often demonstrate them. In the process of creating their simple and intense coherence, these tales also develop important psychic and spiritual concerns.

1 Acts of Truth

WHEN I BEGAN reading for this study, I found the ancient Celtic writings as stimulating and beguiling as the Irish wonder tales which I had already decided were to be the main focus of the book. In earlier versions of the manuscript I included chapters on Cu Chulainn, Finn MacCool, and the Book of Invasions. But as I read over the resulting typescripts I could see that these Celtic tales required so much explication and background that they distracted from the main focus of the study. Not wanting to give up altogether these early tales and the fascinating rituals they often include, I decided to use them where relevant as an introduction to individual wonder tales. Although the wonder tale belongs to an international tradition that is broader and in most respects separate from the ancient Celtic tales, the two often have parallel motifs and incidents because both sprang from pagan sources flourishing before the establishment of Christianity in Europe.

The ancient concept of sacrifice is found in both religious and secular rites. The old Irish tales contain many examples of it, some involving human beings, many involving beasts. Such sacrifices continued in Ireland well into Christian times, as attested in the twelfth century by Giraldus Cambrensis, who described with distaste an obscene rite by which a Celtic king was initiated into office:

> The whole people of that country being gathered in one place, a white mare is led into the midst of them, and he who is to be inaugurated, not as a prince but as a brute, not as a king, but as an outlaw, comes before the people on all fours, confessing himself a beast with no less impudence than imprudence. The mare being immediately killed, and cut in pieces and boiled, a bath is prepared for him from the broth. Sitting in this, he eats of the flesh which is brought to

him, the people standing round and partaking of it also. He is also required to drink of the broth in which he is bathed, not drawing it in any vessel, nor even in his hand, but lapping it with his mouth. These unrighteous rites being duly accomplished, his royal authority and dominion are ratified.

One scholar, Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, has rejected the possibility that this is a 'scandalous calumny' by the Christian commentator. She cites as a clue to its nature an Indian fertility rite in which a king's wife has simulated union with a stallion. In the Celtic example we would expect the fertility of the reign or of the land to be the intent.[1]

When the high king died in ancient Ireland, a similar sacrifice was made of a bull in a rite used to determine who the new king should be. This rite was known as the *tarbfess* (tor' rub fess). The term may be understood to mean either a bull-feast or a bull-sleep.[2] Both could characterize the following example from one of the ancient tales. When a king died, a tarbfess

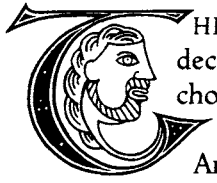
... was prepared by the men of Erin in order to determine their future king; that is a bull was killed by them and thereof one man ate his fill and drank its broth, and a spell of truth was chanted over him in his bed. Whomsoever he would see in his sleep would be king.[3]

This ritual has obvious similarities to the one described by Cambrensis, although in the tarbfess the meat and broth of the chosen animal are eaten by the seer and not by the king himself. In wonder tales, too, we shall find that the slaughter of an animal, especially of a horse by the hero, is common. Although the slaughter is not directly connected with the kingship, it is nevertheless an important act for the hero to perform, connecting him in some way with the other world, as is obviously true of the two examples above.

'The spell of truth' that was chanted over the sleeper who was to dream of the king can be connected with another important aspect of rulership in pagan and Christian Ireland. When a rightful king was on the throne and conducting affairs as a king should, his subjects could expect the kingdom to be secure from attack and its land and rivers to be fruitful. This connection was so well established that it also had a name, which MacCana translates as 'the truth of the ruler' (*Celtic Mythology* 119). But if a king were in any way imperfect in his conduct, there would be crop failure and political instability.

Among several examples from the ancient narratives illustrating this relation between the ruler's probity and the public weal is the tale called 'The Adventures of Art Son of Conn.' The editors of *Ancient Irish Tales* suggest that, 'although it appears in a late manuscript,' this tale 'has all the appearance of belonging to the Old-Irish tradition' (491). There are two separate adventures in the tale: the first is the quest of Conn, the king, for a sinless boy, and the second is the quest of Art, the son, for a woman whom he ultimately marries. Art's quest follows essentially the pattern we looked at in the prologue in the story of Conn-eda. We will be concerned here with the tale of Conn.

THE ADVENTURES OF ART SON OF CONN



THE QUEEN, Art's mother, died, and the king, Art's father, decided to marry again. Unknown to Conn, the woman he chose to be his second wife had been banished from the other world for adultery. She had come to Ireland looking for Art, of whose good reputation she had heard. Meeting his father, Conn, she quickly decided to have him instead:

And they made a union, Conn and the maiden, and she bound him to do her will. And her judgment was that Art should not come to Tara until a year was past ... Art left Tara that night, and Conn and Becuma [the new wife] were a year together in Tara, and there was neither corn nor milk in Ireland during that time. (*Ancient Irish Tales* 493)

The kingdom lost its fruitfulness because the king had married an impure woman. (We are told that during his first marriage 'they used to reap the corn three times in the year' 491.) Turning to the Druids, Conn was told that a sinless youth had to be brought to Tara before the land would become fruitful again.

Sailing alone on the sea, he came to a beautiful pastoral isle. In a hostel there he met the queen of the Isle with her young son. They caused him to be bathed in a vat and fed. The next day he told the king and queen of the island of his problem, asking them to allow their son to go 'to Tara, and afterwards [be] bathed in the water of Ireland' (495). The king was reluctant to let his son leave, but the son insisted on it. The father agreed on condition that his son be put 'under protection of the kings of all Ireland, and Art son of Conn and Finn son of Cumall' (495–6).

Conn agreed to these terms and took the boy back to Ireland. There the Druids advised the king to slay the boy 'and mingle his blood with the blighted earth and the withered trees, so that its due mast and fruit, its fish, and its produce might be in them' (496). The boy's protectors were outraged at this advice.[4] The other warriors present insisted on the sacrifice, but a conflict was avoided when the boy offered himself for the Druid rite.

At that moment 'they heard the lowing of a cow, and a woman wailing continually behind it' (496). Approaching and seating herself beside Conn, the old woman asked the Druids what was in the two bags on each side of the cow. When they could not tell, she ordered the cow slaughtered and the bags opened. A bird was found in each, one with one leg, one with twelve. They fought, and to the amazement of the warriors the one-legged bird won. The old woman then told the Druids that the twelve-legged bird represented them and the one-legged bird the boy; that bird won because his cause was right. The Druids agreed to follow her advice and let the cow's blood be mixed with the soil of Ireland to increase its fruitfulness.

A PARALLEL can be drawn between the sacrifice of the cow as a substitute for the boy and the sacrifice of the mare discussed by Giraldus. But there is evidence that this sacrifice should not have been necessary. Conn originally suggested that the boy come to be 'bathed in the water of Ireland' (495), just as he himself had been bathed in a vat on the isle. If that rite had been performed, it would presumably have consecrated the boy and would thus parallel the bathing of the twelfth-century king in the cauldron of mare's broth.

In fact, however, none of these rites, not even the cow's, can fully purify the kingdom. Before leaving, the old woman prophesies that Ireland will continue to have poor harvests until the cause of its trouble is rectified – that is, until Conn puts aside his impure wife. Because Conn cannot bring himself to do so, this deed falls to his son Art after he has successfully completed the quest on which he was sent by Conn's wife.

The purity of the king's consort was not the only condition necessary for right rule in Celtic Ireland. As Myles Dillon has pointed out, 'a belief in the magic power of truth' was common to ancient Indo-European cultures, as attested by striking parallels between early Celtic and Sanskrit

texts.[5] The Irish tales are of early rulers who knowingly or unknowingly deliver false judgments which cause unnatural events. The importance of a king's giving true judgment is indicated in the problem that arises after the death of King Art. He is succeeded by a man who has no blood-right to the throne. When Cormac (Cor' muck), Art's unrecognized son, appears and gives a true judgment on a case in which the incumbent has given an inadequate judgment, Cormac is immediately installed as king.[6]

Just as truth of speech and integrity of action are essential to the successful rule of an Irish king in the ancient tales, so we will find them to be in the wonder tales. Often it rests with the son to bring such integrity back to the kingdom, as it does with Art, the son of Conn, and as we shall find it does in the tale we are about to consider.

THE KING OF ERIN AND THE QUEEN OF THE LONESOME ISLAND[7]

A KING of Erin, at the end of a day of fruitless hunting, came across a black pig, which he determined to run down. It led him a chase over hill and valley until it came to the sea. The pig rushed in and swam out to sea, the king following on his horse. The horse weakened and drowned, but the king swam on until he in turn grew weak. Fortunately the pig made for an island to which the king was also able to swim. Walking in a valley there, the king found a castle, its threshold guarded by razors below and needles above. But the king jumped between them and came to a broad hearth.

As he warmed himself, a table appeared and was set with food and drink. When he had eaten, the king looked behind him and saw a room with a gold-covered bed in it. He lay down and slept, but woke during the night, aware of the presence of a woman. He could not see her, nor did he speak.

The next morning he left the castle to enter a beautiful enchanted garden, through which he travelled all day without finding a way out. That evening he returned to the castle, and all went as it had the night before. The next day he again left the castle and entered an even more beautiful garden, from which he again could not escape. That night when he felt the presence of the woman, he said, 'It is a wonderful thing for me to pass three nights in a room with a woman, and not see her nor know who she is!' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 51) At that the room was filled with a

bright light, and the beautiful Queen of the Lonesome Island revealed herself. She told the king that she had been the black pig which enticed him to the island and that she and her two sisters were under a Druidic spell from which they could not escape until her son by him should free them. The two again spent the night together, and the next morning she gave him a boat to take him back to Erin.

'Three quarters of a year after, the Queen of Lonesome Island gave birth to a son' (51). She taught him and trained him until he grew into a splendid youth. One day he found her crying because a friend of hers was going to be killed the following day. She told him that this would happen because the King of Spain was invading the kingdom of Erin. The son volunteered to help the King of Erin and set off by boat. He landed and fought not only the King of Spain but his whole army, which he defeated before the army of the King of Erin could get into the battle. The Queen of Erin told her husband that it was the elder of her two sons who had done the heroic deed, even though in fact both sons had hidden themselves in fear before the battle.

The Prince of the Lonesome Island attended the victory feast. At the end of it the queen took him to a chamber and gave him 'a cup of drowsiness to drink' (53). When he closed his eyes, she pushed him out the window which looked upon the sea. The prince revived in the water and swam until he came to a rock in the sea, where he lived by eating seaweed. After three months a ship came by and rescued him, 'his body black from the seaweed, which was growing all over it' (54). The ship took him to the Lonesome Island, where he told his mother what had happened. She replied, 'Well, my son, that will come up against the Queen of Erin on another day' (54).

Three years passed, at the end of which the prince again found his mother crying. She told him that the son of the King of Spain was invading Erin with another large army. Again the prince volunteered to go help the King of Erin and again he destroyed the army single-handed. The queen once more claimed that her elder son was the hero, this time using another method to get rid of the prince of the Lonesome Island. She took the blood of a chicken in her mouth, spat it out, and declared, 'This is my heart's blood; and nothing can cure me now but three bottles of water from Tubber Tintye, the flaming well' (55). The prince volunteered to go for the water, provided her two sons accompanied him. They agreed, and the three young men set off towards the East.

One morning they came to a house in which a woman was wetting her hair with water from a gold basin and combing it with a gold comb. She welcomed the prince as her sister's son, but when she heard where they were bound urged him not to go on such a dangerous mission. When he persisted, she sent them on to his other aunt's house. Her warning frightened the elder son of the Queen of Erin into staying behind.

The next day the prince and the younger brother came to another house with a woman washing her hair in a golden basin and combing it with a golden comb. She also welcomed the prince as her sister's son. Upon hearing his mission, she offered specific advice for circumventing the dangers that lay ahead. Blowing on her horn, she summoned all the birds of the air. Only one old eagle had been to the flaming well of Tubber Tintye, but he was able to tell her that all the people and creatures around it were asleep. This was what the woman wished to hear: they slept for seven years and then were awake for seven. Now was the time for the prince to go.

His aunt gave him a bridle, which he was to shake at her stable and then put on the horse that approached him. The prince went to do this, leaving behind the queen's younger son, who was afraid to accompany him farther. When the prince had shaken the bridle, 'out came a dirty, lean little shaggy horse. "Sit on my back, son of the King of Erin and the Queen of Lonesome Island," said the little shaggy horse. This was the first the prince had heard of his father' (58). With the prince on his back the horse started off, giving him advice about overcoming the obstacles that lay ahead. The horse was successful with the first two. It jumped a river of fire and came safely through the poison trees beyond it. Negotiating the third obstacle depended more on the prince. As the horse sped by the castle of Tubber Tintye, the prince sprang through an open window and landed safely inside. There he found giants, beasts, and monsters of every kind, all asleep.

He climbed a great stairway, coming to a chamber in which lay a beautiful woman. But he knew from his aunt's advice to pass by this and eleven other chambers, each containing a more beautiful woman than the last. Then he reached the thirteenth chamber; opening the door, he beheld the Queen of Tubber Tintye on a golden couch. At the foot of the bed was a gold cover on the flaming well. The prince went up to the couch and stayed there with the sleeping queen for six days and nights.

On the seventh morning he filled three bottles with water from the flaming well. Before leaving he decided it would be only fair to leave

behind word of his visit. He put under the queen's pillow a letter saying who he was and what he had done. Then the horse carried him back to his aunt's stable. There the horse asked him to cut it into four quarters and strike each of them with a Druidic rod which he drew out of its ear. The prince did as directed, and before him stood four princes who had been enchanted into the horse that carried him on his quest. They went back to their own kingdoms. The prince then removed the spell from each of his aunts, who were thus able to accompany him and the two cowardly brothers back to Erin. When they got there, the elder brother snatched the three bottles from the prince and presented them to his mother as though he had got them. The prince went back with his aunts to the Lonesome Island, where he stayed for seven years.

At the end of that time the Queen of Tubber Tintye woke from her long sleep to see a boy of six playing by her couch. 'He had gold on his forehead and silver on his poll. When she saw the child, she began to cry and wring her hands, and said: "Some man has been here while I slept"' (61). She called her sage, who told her that the gold and silver markings indicated the father was a hero; if so he was sure to have left his name behind. Finding the prince's letter, 'the queen was now glad, and proud of the child' (61). She assembled an army, opened a safe way through the river of fire, and marched to the castle of the King of Erin. She asked either for a battle or for the man who had entered her chamber. The king called in his elder son and asked if he had entered it; he replied that he had. As a test the invading queen had the son mount her grey steed, which 'threw him on a rock, and dashed the brains out his head' (62). The younger son also claimed to have been in the chamber, but he also was thrown off the grey steed and killed.

Since the queen still threatened battle if the man who had come to her chamber was not produced, the king sent to Lonesome Island for the queen, her sisters, and his son the prince. They came, and when the son mounted the grey steed, it rose into the sky. Standing on its back, he was able to 'cut three times with his sword as he went up under the sun. When he came to the earth again, the Queen of Tubber Tintye ran over to him, put his head on her bosom, and said: "You are the man"' (63). Then she called the Queen of Erin and ordered her to put on a belt of silk. The belt began to tighten, and the Queen of Tubber Tintye demanded to know who the father of the elder son was. In pain the Queen of Erin confessed that the gardener was, then that the brewer was the father of her second son.

After this confession, the Queen of Tubber Tintye told the King of Erin to have his wife killed. He had her thrown into a fire which destroyed her at once. Then the queen told him to marry the Queen of Lonesome Island. The king invited guests from all over the world to the double wedding. Afterwards, the king's new wife stayed in his castle as the Queen of Erin. Meanwhile, the Queen of Tubber Tintye 'removed the Druidic spells from her giants, beasts, and monsters' (64). The prince then went with her to become 'King of Tubber Tintye and lord of the golden chamber.' (64).

TRUTH, good faith, and justice are almost as intimately involved with the right to rule in this tale as in those older ones we have already considered. For instance, the silk belt at the end of this story forces out of the false queen what she would not otherwise reveal, in this way functioning like the Celtic 'Act of Truth' discussed by Myles Dillon ('Archaism of Irish Tradition' 247). Yet the Queen of Tubber Tintye may not be entirely disinterested when she urges such a violent punishment for the Queen of Erin. Once that sentence is carried out, she says to the King of Erin, 'Now do you marry the Queen of Lonesome Island, and my child will be grandchild to you and to her' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 64). Her child will be their grandchild even if they do not marry, but if they do he will be the legitimate heir to two kingdoms. The double marriage removes from her child the double stigma of being the bastard son of a bastard. And the double marriage is possible only if the original Queen of Erin is put aside. Both she and the new queen may therefore be seen as working to secure a place for their offspring, the two sons of the first queen being the illicit fruit of a legal marriage, the prince and his son being the heroic fruit of extra-legal unions.

But the original queen has earned her punishment in other ways. She has lied about her sons' abilities, for which she must pay the price of seeing them forced to mount the dangerous grey steed that kills them. More important, she has attempted murder by pushing the prince out of a window after giving him drugged wine. There is, then, a poetic justice in her death as well as in that of her sons. There is also a moral justice in her removal from the queenship, just as there was in the removal of Conn's adulterous wife.

But what of the morality of the King of Erin and his son the prince? The king gives the Queen of the Lonesome Island a child at her own

request, for her own ends. He is certainly guilty of adultery by Christian standards, but not by pagan ones, as we will see in chapter five when we look at two adventures of the epic hero Cu Chulainn.[8] The prince, on the other hand, is not asked to provide the Queen of Tubber Tintye with a child, but neither is he already married. Because he has left behind a note describing his identity and his actions, he has shown himself honourable by taking responsibility for his actions.

The king, admittedly, is no hero on the battlefield, even though we may see him as persistent in the hunt. He has chosen a poor mate, one who indulges her sexual appetite to the detriment of the kingdom. If repelling the Spanish invasion depended on her offspring, Erin would be as good as conquered. Unable to father children with his wife, the king does so with a more suitable mate, the result being a hero who saves the kingdom. I put the events in this way not to suggest that the king consciously realizes that he has been cuckolded but to indicate that the structure of the tale seems to have this logic. The answer to a real problem of which the king is not conscious comes through his visit to another world. To reach that world he has to show not bravery in battle but fortitude and steadfastness of purpose. The hunt becomes a quest, the impetus coming from the other world.

Why does a woman with magic powers entice a man to her? Perhaps because she is a fertility goddess. In Irish tradition her transformation into a black pig had deep implications. Anne Ross speculates that 'the hunting of the otherworld boar must have constituted one of the most fundamental Celtic cult legends' (*Pagan Celtic Britain* 313). Not only the boar but the pig and the sow also figure in Celtic myth (the name of one Celtic god, Moccus, means 'pig' [310]), as well as in its literature ('The insular literatures are full of references to beings metamorphosed in pig form' 313). Ross concludes that the animal seems 'to have been symbolic of fertility (agricultural and sexual) and of war' (321).

It is easy to connect the black pig with the sex act that is the reason for enticing the king to the island. In both heroic and wonder tales, when the other world beckons, it is because a hero from this world can be of service in that one. The service may be to fight battles, but it also may be to father a hero. The Queen of the Lonesome Island says that their son will release her from the Druidic spell, which presumably will not allow her to leave the island in her own form. The prince does finally free his mother and her two sisters; before that, however, he frees his father, not from a

spell but from an invading army. He thus satisfies a two-fold need, part in the 'real' world, part in the 'other' world, or, as it could also be phrased, part in the conscious world and part in the unconscious.

I mention conscious and unconscious because of the dreamlike quality of the king's movement to and experiences in the other world. In the world of dreams there is a voice which speaks while the conscious 'I' is asleep; it expresses an understanding of my needs beyond what I am aware of when awake. If I pay attention to this voice or vision, I become a fuller person. Commentators on the fairy tale observe a similar dynamic in them.[9] In this particular tale, the queen in the unconscious realm sees the future more clearly than the king who has to run the conscious realm. If he listens to her, his life will be enlarged, his rule more successful.

The Queen of the Lonesome Island functions as the representative of the king's unassimilated nature. He leaves the realm where he is sovereign for one in which his sexual opposite is in command. There he does her will, planting the seed that will save him when all his own everyday precautions prove inadequate. But like Conn in the ancient tale, the King of Erin cannot prosper as long as he is married to an adulterous wife. And like Conn's son Art, the prince must save his father by bringing back to Erin a woman from the other world who will successfully demand the removal of the false queen.

The episodes in the best of the wonder tales can all be taken as meaningful events. The adventures of the prince provide a good illustration. Both times that he saves Erin from the forces of Spain he finds himself at the disposal of his father's wife. The second time she sends him on a quest which provides him with a bride who becomes the nemesis of the false queen. Even the first time she unknowingly does the prince a favour; we can see how by observing the parallel with his father's similar adventure. Both are immersed in the sea and are forced to swim for their lives. Both come to an island, the king to the Lonesome Island, the prince to a mere rock from which he is eventually transported back to his mother's island. Why was he not allowed to swim there directly?

The answer is that the prince undergoes an experience on the rock which his mother could not give him. She taught him 'warlike exercises' and schooled him in 'the learning of wise men' and 'Druidic spells' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 51). On the rock, however, he learns not by being provided for but by being deprived. We are told he had to eat seaweed and that, when found, instead of clothes he was wearing black seaweed which had

grown from his body. Where his mother voluntarily put herself in danger by becoming a black pig to be hunted by a king, her son involuntarily finds himself in danger of starving on a rock. His metamorphosis is towards the vegetative, an even lower level than the beast she became.

Just as there is a mythic background behind his mother's transformation into a pig, so there is a background in myth, legend, and folk tale for the prince's. Ovid tells of the Greek demigod Glaucus, a mortal who ate magic grass that impelled him into the sea, where he grew a 'rusty green beard' and 'hair that covered his shoulders and streamed down his back and the lower part of his body.'[10] More to our purpose is Plato's earlier description of 'the clinging overgrowth of *weed* and rock and shell' that makes Glaucus 'more like some monster than his natural self.'[11] The hairy wild man appears in folk tales in his own right and as the Hairy Anchorite.[12] These creatures participate in a pattern which we saw in another form in the twelfth-century prince's 'confessing himself a beast' before he could be crowned king: degradation followed by elevation.

I believe that the incident in which the prince is marooned has the same effect. Although he has already experienced a warrior's apotheosis in defeating a whole army, he is denied credit for this feat. He really is destined for greater triumphs, and I would suggest that his isolation and devolution are an essential preparation for them. Each hero we shall meet, if his success is to be unmixed, must demonstrate by some clear-cut action his worthiness to achieve not just his goal but the grounding of character which will ensure the stability of his accomplishment. Where the goal is achieved too easily, especially where it involves the hero in voluntary transformations, we may perceive in the structure of the tale clear signs of the instability of the resolution. Since the prince's reversion to wild man is involuntary, we may expect signs that the successful conclusion of his quest will bring lasting stability.

In accepting the quest that the false queen instigates by feigning sick, the prince demands that her two sons accompany him. As usual in this type of tale, their cowardice means that they are of no help to the prince, while their duplicity causes him once again to lose credit for his achievement. The first two times it is their mother who shows them how to take false credit. In the third instance, by claiming to have entered the chamber of the Queen of Tubber Tintye, they make the characteristic their own and thereby seal their fates. In this story, as frequently in Irish tales, those who live a lie die by violence. Their mother also lives a lie, both in

committing adultery and in pretending to be sick. As a result she receives not only the curing water, which is of no use to her, but also a fatal visit from the queen of the flaming well from which the water came. It is fitting that that emissary of the other world, which the adulterous queen disturbed in bad faith, should destroy her.

Good faith, like truth, is an essential attribute of the successful ruler. Thus Conn protected from ritual murder the lad who came from the other world to help bring fruitfulness back to Conn's kingdom. And thus the prince has acted in good faith by demanding neither recognition nor reward for getting the water of cure; he simply leaves after rendering the boon he intended.

To discover what he has further achieved, however, we need to look more closely at his quest. The prince's aunts have golden basins and combs, but they live isolated from the human world. The second one asks her nephew, 'Was it the misfortune of the world that brought you to live under Druidic spells like me and my sisters?' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 56). Despite the spell she is under, this sister has powers which can benefit both the prince and herself. First she uses a horn which calls all the birds of the air, and second she gives him a magic bridle to use on the talking horse which reveals the prince's paternity to him. Like the aunts, the horse aids the prince in order to free itself from a Druidic spell. The prince's relation to it may be compared with his father's to his horse. In both cases the animal dies before the quest is completed. But the contrasts are more revealing. The king's was a common horse whose death simply left him on his own (a stage the prince went through on the rock). The prince's horse helps him overcome otherwise insuperable obstacles such as the river of fire.

We have already noted that the sense of wholeness submerged in the lower animal is a pagan motif of some importance. Certainly it is present in the ceremony we outlined at the beginning of this chapter: the bath that the ruler-elect took in the broth of a sacrificed mare was the key part of that twelfth-century initiation. There are of course more contrasts than similarities between that sacrifice and the prince's sacrifice of the shaggy horse. But we have seen that testing for fitness by a horse appears at the climax of this tale. We shall discover that the prince's experience with the grey horse at the end is closer in import to the historical ritual.

The end of the tale will also reveal the importance of the hero's right relation to the female. Just as the king has balanced a petty queen with a

noble one, so in a different way the prince has to balance his noble, long-suffering mother with a more personally aggressive source of strength, the queen he chooses as a mate. His mother weeps and begs him to go to help a king she will not even admit is his father. His mate storms and demands the death of a woman after causing that of the woman's two sons. Earlier I referred to this other-world queen as the nemesis of the false queen. Just as the true queen (who bears the prince) can be contrasted with the false queen (who bears two cowards), so a raging queen who is straightforwardly destructive may also be contrasted with the false queen who is deviously destructive.

Aware of herself as a victim of Druidic spells, the Queen of the Lonesome Island uses tears to accomplish her ends. The energy of the raging queen comes as a salutary contrast to those tears, as well as to the bland gullibility of the king, the adept duplicity of his spouse, the weak opportunism of her two sons, and the long-suffering heroics of the prince. The question we are left with is whether the prince has the strength to be a consort of the Queen of Tubber Tintye. His mastery of the horse and its rising up to the sun are good signs. And the fact that she makes him not only King of Tubber Tintye but lord of the golden chamber is another, since it was in that chamber that he first acted on his impulse for pleasure and mastery. Still, their removal to her domain is a matter of concern.

In contrast, the king's marrying the Queen of the Lonesome Island and making her Queen of Erin is obviously good. Truth and justice have triumphed in his kingdom; we can expect that fruitfulness and victory (in the event of more invasions) will follow. Her acknowledgment of adversity and her knowledge of spells, coupled with her frankness and love, will complement the king's noncommital perseverance. What was suppressed, unconscious, has entered the realm of consciousness.

In the light of this resolution of the original problem, what are we to make of the prince's removal to the other world? First, we should note that it balances his mother the queen's entry into this world. Schematically, the Queen of Tubber Tintye is further from this world than was the Queen of the Lonesome Island. The latter could visit Erin by metamorphosis. The former was cut off from this world by the river of fire, the poison trees, the castle, the monsters, and by sleep, an obvious metaphor of unconsciousness. Once awakened, she comes to this world, but only for a visit. Whether taken as Freudian id or Jungian anima, she has too strong a nature to remain in the land of consciousness.

Second, we should look at the relation of the prince to the two worlds. His father is from this world; his mother was kept in the other. Having grown up there, he is fitted for life in the other world by his formative experiences in it, including his devolutionary isolation on the rock. Just as the king will gain from having a noble queen beside him on the throne in Erin, so the Queen of Tubber Tintye will gain by having a mate to give stability to her previously distorted realm.

Taking the prince as the central figure in the tale, we can appreciate his final destiny more fully by looking at the light imagery connected with his encounters with the Queen of Tubber Tintye. This imagery is the opposite of that associated with his experience on the rock. The latter is a symbolic representation of the underwater world in which he undergoes a sea change, not into rich pearl or strange coral but into black seaweed, a lower form of life associated with a dark, unconscious existence. By accepting this experience, the prince prepares himself for the encounter with high light which follows.

He first meets light as a test in the river of fire, then as the objective of his quest in the flaming well. Only the chamber itself in any way intimidates him:

> When he reached the thirteenth chamber and opened the door, the flash of gold took the sight from his eyes. He stood a while till the sight came back, and then entered. In the great bright chamber was a golden couch, resting on wheels of gold. (59)

This gold chamber is clearly a substitute for the sun, the original source of light and life which mere man cannot face. Being in it, the prince must face it, unless he should close his eyes. Instead, he leaves them open and waits until they adjust to the light. Now he is at one with the light, which fact helps us to understand why, when he is tested later, the climax of his triumph is to stand on the horse as it rises high into the sky and 'cut three times with his sword' as he goes up 'under the sun.' It is following this act that the raging queen changes her mood. She treats him softly, maternally ('put his head on her bosom'), and accepts him unconditionally ('you are the man'). Similar proof of his high connection with light had already been left with her in the appearance of the child he fathered. The sage interprets the gold forehead as a sign not of the child's maternal inheritance but of his father's being a hero.

At the spiritual-psychological level to which the tale has moved, the hero is rather the figure of light than the victor in battle. The prince has early functioned as battle hero, twice saving his father's kingdom, only to be rewarded with treachery, which twice leads him to further internal development. His next two triumphs, in contrast to the earlier two, do not involve warfare. First he makes a union with the queen of the golden chamber and leaves behind proof of his own gold nature. Then he mounts a horse and, like the twelfth-century king with the mare, demonstrates his harmony with the 'lower' instinctual life which it represents. The difference is that the prince, rather than being demeaned like the early king, is transfigured by maintaining perfect balance on the horse as it unexpectedly rises to the author of light. His cuts with the sword are flourishes only, yet do serve as a signal to the angry queen that he has been a master of destruction, not only as a battle hero but as the slayer of another magic horse.

Because the grey horse serves as a test to determine who is the real father of the hero child, mounting it is really an act of truth. The two brothers lie and are destroyed. The prince tells the truth and is confirmed as a hero hardly to be contained in this world.[13] Following his long period of self-abnegation, the prince thus demonstrates that his is a high destiny indeed. Like the twelfth-century king who coupled with the mare as a necessary part of his royal inauguration, the prince is given the title of king by the Queen of Tubber Tintye because of his ride on the grey horse. We realize why he is in no danger when he returns to live in a tamed other world, how he has earned no less title than 'lord of the gold chamber,' king of the land of the flaming well.

The heroes we shall be meeting in the next five chapters do not win through to such a high destiny as the prince in this tale. But what their adventures lack in spiritual overtones is made up by other virtues the tales possess. In the next two chapters, for instance, we shall meet heroes who acquire the ability to transform themselves; in the following three we shall look at still other interesting means of achieving power and the difficulties that accompany both the gaining and the possession of it.

2 Self-transformation and Alienation

IN THE LAST CHAPTER we looked at human relations and the desire for mastery. The tale we shall be considering in this chapter illustrates the same concerns. It involves the apprenticeship of a backward youth to a shape-shifting magician, a powerful representative of the other world.[1] The effect of this apprenticeship, as the youth becomes an active hero who finally overcomes his mentor, provides an unusual and illuminating example of the distortion of human feelings, relations, and values that can accompany the transforming power.

To balance the emphasis on the Celtic background of these tales that was given in chapter one, later in this chapter I shall introduce a formal model for the analysis of the international wonder tale. The book which offers this model, *The Morphology of the Folktale,* was published over fifty years ago by the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp; it was the first scholarly work to concentrate on the structure of these tales. But before turning to Propp's model we need to scrutinize the particular Irish tale in a more literary-thematic manner.

THE FISHERMAN'S SON AND THE GRUAGACH OF TRICKS

N OLD FISHERMAN had an only son who he feared was not bright enough to support the boy's mother if the fisherman should die. One day a boat came to shore with a man who identified himself as the Gruagach of Tricks and offered to make a wise man of the son. The fisherman wanted to get his wife's advice, but the Gruagach said the bargain had to be made there and then. The fisherman agreed, and the Gruagach promised to bring the son back a year later.

At the end of the year, the fisherman returned to the spot and saw two men approaching in a boat. One looked like the Gruagach, but the old man did not recognize the other as his son. When the Gruagach showed him it was his son, the fisherman was so impressed with the change that he agreed to let the son stay with the Gruagach another year. But as the Gruagach took the son out in his boat he shouted to the old man: 'I kept my promise to bring back your son today. I haven't given you my word at all now. I'll not bring him back, and you'll never see him again' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 87).[2]

The fisherman went home sadly to tell his wife. After the parents had lamented the loss of their son for several months, the father decided to go in search of him. One evening he came to the hut of an old woman who was able to direct him to the house of the Gruagach.

When he came and entered the house, the Gruagach shook hands with him, and said: 'You are welcome, old fisherman. It was I that put this journey on you, and made you come here looking for your son.'

'It was no one else but you,' said the fisherman.

'Well,' said the Gruagach, 'you won't see your son to-day. At noon to-morrow I'll put a whistle in my mouth and call together all the birds in my place, and they'll come ... You must pick your son out of the twelve.' (88–9)

In his bed that night, the fisherman was approached by his son, who told him that he would be the dove with the spot under one wing. Following his son's advice, the old man was able to claim the correct dove. '"Well," said the Gruagach, "that is your son. I can't blame you for having him; but I blame your instructor for the information he gave you, and I give him my curse"' (90). Father and son went home, and the old woman was overjoyed to have her son back.

One day the son said to his father,

'Come away with me, father, to the races.' The old man went with him, and when they were near the race-course, the son said: 'Stop here till I tell you this: I'll make myself into the best horse that's here to-day, and do you take me to the place where the races are to be, and when you take me in, I'll open my mouth, trying to kill and eat every man that'll be near me, I'll have such life and swiftness; and do you find a rider for me ... I'll run ahead of them and win the race. After that every rich man there will want to buy me of you; but don't you sell me to any man for less than five hundred pounds ... And when you have the gold, and you are giving me up, take the bit out of my mouth, and don't sell the bridle for any money. Then come to this spot, shake the bridle, and I'll be here in my own form before you.' (90–1)

The fisherman agreed, did as the son directed, and it all happened as the son had said.

Back home, they lived in comfort without having to fish for a living. A year later, a great hunt with hounds was proclaimed. The son wanted to enter, but the father protested that they were well enough off. Finally, however, he let his son persuade him to go. After warning the father not to give away the rope that tied him, the son changed into a hound which caught the game and won the prize of the hunt. Men wanting to buy the hound swarmed around the father.

They put the old man in a maze, there were so many of them, and they pressed him so hard. He said at last: 'I'll sell the hound; and three hundred pounds is the price I want for him.'

'Here 'tis for you,' said a stranger, putting the money into his hand. The old man took the money and gave up the dog, without taking off the rope. He forgot his son's warning. That minute the Gruagach ... called out: 'I'll take the worth of my money out of your son now'; and away he went with the hound. (93)

The old man went home sadly, and he and his wife lamented all night long. But they were still able to live in comfort.

The Gruagach went away home, and put the fisherman's son in a cave of concealment that he had, bound him hand and foot, and tied hard knots on his neck up to the chin. From above there fell on him drops of poison, and every drop that fell went from the skin to the flesh, from the flesh to the bone, from the bone to the marrow, and he sat there under the poison drops, without meat, drink, or rest ...

On a day when the Gruagach and his eleven sons were out hunting, the maid was going with a tub of dirty water to throw it into the river ... She went through the cave of concealment where the fisherman's son was bound, and he asked of her the wetting of his mouth from the tub.

'Oh! the Gruagach would take the life of me,' said she, 'when he comes home, if I gave you as much as one drop.'

'Well,' said he, 'when I was in this house before, and when I had power in my hands, it's good and kind I was to you; and when I get out of this confinement I'll do you a turn.' (93–4)

The maid relented and untied a knot around his throat so he could drink. Immediately he made an eel of himself and dropped in the tub. He quickly splashed enough water out to be able to slip along the floor. The maid caught him, but he was too slippery to hold and was able to make his way to the river.

When the Gruagach returned, he noticed the absence of the fisherman's son, and the maid confessed what had happened. The Gruagach and his sons made eels of themselves and went looking in the river for the fisherman's son.

And when he knew that they were after him, he made himself into a salmon; and when they knew he was a salmon, the sons made eleven otters of themselves, and the Gruagach made himself the twelfth. When the fisherman's son found that twelve otters were after him, he was weak with hunger, and when they had come near, he made himself a whale. But the eleven brothers and father made twelve cannon whales of themselves, for they had all gone out of the river, and were in the sea now. (95)

When they drew near him, the fisherman's son jumped out of the water, turning himself into a swallow. They followed him, turning themselves into hawks. The twelve hawks were pressing the swallow hard when it saw a king's daughter sitting outside. The swallow turned into a ring which fell into her lap; the princess put it on. Seeing this, the hawks turned back into twelve men who entered the castle, where they entertained the king for three days and three nights with the best music and sport he had ever heard or seen. At the end of that time he asked them what reward they would like. The Gruagach replied that he wanted only the return of a ring he had lost and the princess now had. The king agreed.

'When the king's daughter had the ring on her finger she looked at it and liked it. Then the ring spoke, and said: "My life is in your hands now; don't part from the ring, and don't let it go to any man, and you'll give me a long life"' (96). The ring also told her what to do when she was summoned by her father. She had whisky poured in a barrel of wheat, which was set before the king's fire. When the king demanded the ring, she at first refused to part with it.

'You must,' said the king, 'for my word is pledged' ... When she heard this, she slipped the ring from her finger and threw it into the fire. That moment the eleven brothers made eleven pair of tongs of themselves; their father, the old Gruagach, was the twelfth pair. The twelve jumped into the fire to know in what spark of it would they find the old fisherman's son; and they were a long time working and searching through the fire, when out flew a spark, and into the barrel. (97)

The tongs turned back into men who overturned the barrel, spilling the wheat on the floor. Then they became twelve cocks eating the wheat. But

because of the whisky in it, one cock after another fell down drunk. When the last one fell, one grain of wheat turned into a fox which bit off the head of the cock that was the Gruagach and then the heads of his eleven sons.

'When the twelve were dead, the old fisherman's son made himself the finest-looking man in Erin, and began to give music and sport to the king; and he entertained him five times better than had the Gruagach and his eleven sons' (98). The princess fell in love with him, and the king not only allowed her to marry him but stepped down from the throne and made the fisherman's son king of Erin.

AT THE BEGINNING of this tale the son is characterized as 'not so keen nor so wise as another' (85); he is never consulted by the father during either negotiation with the Gruagach about his apprenticeship. In fact the son says no word in the tale until the father as hero finds the house of the Gruagach. Then he appears as a helper and tells the father how to recognize and free him. Apprenticing with the Gruagach seems to have made the son both keen and wise. From this point on he takes the initiative time after time with great authority.

We might ask why the son insists on getting more money when his first transformation has already made them well off. The answer does not lie in any concern about long-term provision for his parents. We might simply say that the son (like other Irish wonder-tale heroes) has a need to prove himself or an unconscious desire to develop further. But in fact the situation is more complex than this.

Since the Gruagach is a shape-shifter, we know that he taught the son transformations during the apprenticeship. Like any magician the Gruagach is a searcher for power, unafraid to use it, even in destructive ways. A strict bargainer, he holds the father to the letter of their first two agreements and holds himself to the third by letting the son go. Because he realizes that the son has counselled the father, however, he gives him his curse. I suggest that, whatever the Gruagach intends, the effect of that curse is to send the apprentice on essentially the same quest for power that the Gruagach himself is on: a need to use transformation for personal gain and for pleasure in destruction. I would also suggest that the ironic outcome of that curse is that the pupil triumphs over the mentor.

Some indication of the meaning of transformation to the son is evident in his relish at the prospect of becoming a horse: 'I'll open my mouth, trying to kill and eat every man that'll be near me.' This same destructive-

ness, again with overtones of cannibalism, is evident in his later transformation into a fox that bites off the heads of the twelve cocks. Since the Gruagach and his sons have shown themselves bent on his destruction, the fox's action may be taken as acceptable self-defence, the only way out of the difficulties in which the son has become involved.

Who bears responsibility for that involvement? The son, of course, for turning himself into a dog when he didn't need to. But the Gruagach does also, since part of his curse seems to have been to make the son want to exercise his power of transformation. (The fact that the Gruagach goes to the hunt and buys the hound supports this view.) The father, certainly, for forgetting to take off the rope that then keeps the hound bound to his new owner. This is the second time that the father has forgotten to secure his son's future freedom. The first time he takes responsibility and rescues his son. The second time, it is up to the son to free himself.

Another way of approaching the problem is to consider the importance of women to the men in this tale. The Gruagach tells the fisherman that he will have 'nothing to do with' women (86), and his subsequent actions bear this out. Although the Gruagach knows that the princess has the ring he wants, he goes through the father to get it. This way of dealing at first works to the advantage of the Gruagach and to the disadvantage of the fisherman and his son. A manipulator, the Gruagach uses his power to impress men. In contrast, the fisherman and his son use their need to get help from women. And their dependence on women allows them to best the Gruagach each time. Dealing man to man, the father loses his son twice to the Gruagach. But going with his wife's agreement and helped by the advice of the old woman, he is able to get to the house of the Gruagach, where he retrieves his stolen son.

The son places even greater reliance on women. He escapes from his bondage and the drops of poison only because of the maid, and he twice escapes from the pursuit of the Gruagach and his sons with the help of the princess. It is not difficult to see what these women represent. The mother laments her son's loss; the old woman sympathizes with the condition of the fisherman after his wearing search for his son; the maid 'hadn't the heart to refuse' the son's request for water; the princess responds to the son's plea that his life is in her hands. In other words, all four women display traits traditionally associated with their sex: feeling, sympathy, heart, human love. These traits are the antithesis of those shown by the Gruagach.

Which does the son choose, the helpful sympathy of the women or the transforming power of the Gruagach? The earliest trait he shows is one he reminds the maid about: when he had power, he was considerate of her. The implication is clear: she might have expected him to be selfish or cruel with his power, but instead he was kind. This kindness is that good deed which the hero of a wonder tale invariably performs to warrant the fortunate outcome of his adventures. Against it we must place the son's use of power, when he is transformed into a horse, to threaten people and to cheat someone of several hundred pounds. It could be argued that the son knows his buyer will be the Gruagach, in which case the cheating is less serious but the need to compete for power is more irrational and the danger thus much greater.

The final test of the son's values comes at the end of the tale. I have suggested that his killing of the Gruagach is mitigated because it is an act of self-defence. But there are other circumstances connected with his triumph that need scrutiny. We have seen that the Gruagach and his sons ingratiate themselves with the king by their ability at sports and music. After the son has killed them and turned into a handsome hero, he also entertains the king 'with music and sport,' only 'five times better than had the Gruagach and his eleven sons. Then the king's daughter fell in love with him.' Presumably she falls in love because he is so handsome and because of his ability to entertain.

The manner in which we are told of the ability of the fisherman's son suggests that he is still competing with the Gruagach, still relating to the world as the Gruagach taught him, still proud of his ability as a manipulator and shape-shifter. Even his transfiguration at the end is not one given him by circumstance; rather he has 'made himself the finest looking man in Erin.' This need suggests a person still beset by insecurity. The fisherman's son seems to have forgotten that the appropriate use of power is to be good and kind. He doesn't invite his parents to his wedding, nor does he think of the maid who helped him, despite his promise to her.

Some indication of why things have turned out this way is provided by Irving Massey in his discussion of metamorphosis. 'The man who desires metamorphosis is looking for identification with the alien life in self-sufficient matter. Since we have no control over this alien state, it offers us the hope, if we can really identify ourselves with it, of trying out different points of view or even of our becoming something different from what we are.'[3] We can sympathize with the lad who begins life as the dull son of a

fisherman and within a year of being apprenticed to a magician has taken on the appearance of a person of high degree (*Myths and Folk Tales* 85–6). To learn that life offers challenges and options is good. To want to gain power and become someone of importance is understandable. But there are obvious dangers in entering an 'alien state' to accomplish these ends.

An indication of the cost can be gained from a footnote in Massey's book. 'Metamorphosis and identity are the two limits of human existence, incompatible with one another, but complementary in that human life exists in a movement between these two limits' (*Gaping Pig* 205–6). Identity is what we saw our first wonder-tale hero striving for, identity reached by a process of adventure. This process imposes on the son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island a devolutionary transformation (sprouting seaweed on his body) followed by selfless conduct, first in battle to save his father's kingdom and then on a dangerous quest. His involuntary transformation helps to establish a stable character. His marriage to the Queen of Tubber Tintye is part of a reciprocal relation in which both partners have learned and grown. By contrast, the fisherman's son appears so addicted to 'alien states' that he is not particularly interested in his own identity.

The various transformations which the son undergoes, however, form an interesting pattern. Before capture he becomes a horse and then a dog, two domesticated land animals. After capture he becomes an eel, a sea creature able to move on land. Getting to the river as an eel, he then becomes a salmon and a whale. Leaving the water, he becomes a swallow. Up to this point, then, he has been a creature of the three elements where life is found, earth, water, and air. Now he becomes an inanimate object, a ring, which the princess puts on her finger. Considering the opposing value-systems we have seen in the tale, this transformation into a feminine symbol that is protected by a woman could be a good omen. But he is further forced to transform himself into a spark (the fourth element) and then into a grain of wheat. With that metamorphosis, he has run the gamut of possibilities, not only the four elements but the three conditions, animal, vegetable, and mineral.

His last transformation brings the series full circle, back to a wild land animal, the fox. As the final form and the one in which he takes decisive action to resolve his problem, the fox represents an important choice. I do not find it very reassuring. As Beryl Rowland records, since biblical times Western society has consistently viewed the fox as crafty and dissimu-

lating.[4] These attributions make the fox an appropriate form for the son to take as he tricks the Gruagach and his sons into a stupor before killing them. Dissimulation has become a way of life for him, beginning with his transformation into a horse and ending with his transformation into the finest man in Erin.

Looking at the circumstances in which the fisherman's son finds himself, we must be sympathetic to the effect on him of the Gruagach's teaching. The power of the Gruagach makes him a much more impressive role-model than the boy's simple and sometimes ineffective father. We must also remember the pressure of the Gruagach's aggressive pursuit, which makes most of the son's transformations all but involuntary. But having said so much in mitigation of the son's actions, we must also note that when the pressure of the powerful Gruagach is finally removed, the son continues in the same vein. And the father is no mere bumbler. He has taken responsibility for his first error, searched for his son, and brought him back home. It is true that the son must rescue himself after the father's second error, but it is also true that the son, against his father's desire, has created a situation in which the old fisherman cannot function effectively.

Unlike the son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island, the fisherman's son has not reached a higher stage of development. He has not been through a process of give and take with a member of the opposite sex in which both have learned from mistakes. The fisherman's son is offered a chance at such growth through his promise to the Gruagach's maid, but instead of reaffirming in some way the kindness he had earlier shown her, at the end of the tale he forgets her. The basis for an optimistic inference such as I made about the ending of 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island' is absent here, largely because the fisherman's son has gone through tutelage in the art of self-transformation in order to gain power rather than real insight or wisdom.

With this conclusion on the thematic and psychological level in mind, I propose to turn to the structural scheme of Vladimir Propp and apply it to the tale we have just studied. Propp's analysis aims at making it possible to study a wonder tale 'according to the functions of its dramatis personae.'[5] A function he defines as 'an act of a character' as it bears on the development of the plot. Propp comes to four major conclusions, the first that 'functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled' (21). For example, Propp

sees the hero as prepared for his adventure by a donor, a human being, or a creature that offers either information or more material aid to the hero. This donor-function may be fulfilled by a witch, a relative, a knight, a ferryman, or even a dragon (39–40). In fact the donor may take the form of some disputants who have magic objects they are unable to divide fairly (41). Then the hero will win something from them for making a fair division, or will simply steal the items in question. In this case their function as donors is involuntary, but Propp would still see it as being fulfilled.

Propp's second general conclusion is that 'the number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited' (21). The motifs in such a tale might run over a hundred (for Stith Thompson's six-volume *Motif-Index*, see Appendix A); but the number of functions cannot exceed thirty-one, the number that Propp explicates in chapter three of his work. This is not surprising, since a focus on structure tends to abstract principles, to subsume many details.

The third general conclusion is more striking and more dubious. 'The sequence of functions is always identical' (*Morphology* 22). Sometimes this is because functions are paired. For instance, a common beginning to wonder tales includes the following paired functions: 'An interdiction is addressed to the hero' and 'The interdiction is violated' (26–7). In another type of magician's-apprentice tale, the apprentice is forbidden to look into a certain room while the magician is gone. As the reader expects, the apprentice does look inside, thus breaking the interdiction.

Propp admits that in practice either member of a pair of functions may be absent. Sometimes the interdiction is issued but never broken, though this absence is usually the sign of a garbled tale. More likely is the violation of an unstated interdiction, as when the apprentice looks into the room and is punished even though the magician had not expressly forbidden the action. I am able to accept such qualifications of Propp's formula, but at a couple of points in his study he tacitly indicates that functions may appear out of sequence.[6] In my experience they do, thus contradicting his third conclusion. In short, he confronts the difficulties of all systematizers: even man-made reality is too various to fit easily into one pattern.

Propp's final generalization therefore needs tempering: 'All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure' (23). It would certainly be fair to say that his system can present a formula which demonstrates an

amazing 'uniformity in the construction of fairy tales' (105). But Propp insists that it is a '*total* uniformity' (my italics). Fortunately, the usefulness of his system does not depend on this conclusion. Using the letters of the alphabet, Propp created a structural formula to outline the plot of a wonder tale. Since I have provided in Appendix B a detailed explication of this formula for the interested reader, I shall here indicate its pattern in general terms only.[7] ABC↑ are four discrete functions making up the initial complication (with ↑ standing for the hero's leaving home [39]). DEFG introduce the donor, the hero's receipt of something, and his continued movement. HJI concern the hero's engaging in combat with and defeating the villain. K↓ show the hero's remedying the original difficulty and returning home. Pr-Rs indicate the pursuit of the hero and his rescue. In °LQEx, the hero arrives home unrecognized – 'a false hero presents unfounded claims' (60) – but the real hero is recognized and exposes the false one. In TUW 'the hero is given a new appearance' (62), 'the villain is punished,' and 'the hero is married and ascends the throne' (62–3).

The reader will have noticed some seeming repetitions in this explication. If the hero defeats the villain at I, who pursues at Pr? and how is the villain punished at U? The answer is first that the defeat of the villain does not necessarily mean his death; and second, that the villain punished at U is often not the same villain who is defeated at I. Like the scientific law on which it is modelled, Propp's simple formulation hides a multiplicity of actual possibilities. His T, for instance, in which the hero is given a new appearance, occurs in only five instances of the seventy-four that are included in his third appendix. Yet without it the formula will not cover all cases. Since he was aiming at comprehensiveness, we have to be sympathetic to this cumbersome inclusion. I am especially sympathetic in this case since I consider the transfiguration of the hero a very important step in those cases where it happens.

When applying Propp's scheme to 'The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks' we should not expect to find all the functions of his ideal model. As we have already seen, some of those distinctions represent only a small minority of cases. But we should expect that all the characters will correlate with his dramatis personae and that all important actions in the tale will correlate with his functions. In fact, two of the characters match his dramatis personae even in name: the princess and her father (the king). Two other roles are the villain and the donor (provider). In this tale they appear as the same character, the Gruagach who first teaches the son what he needs to know (provides for him) and then becomes his enemy

(the villain). Since Propp was interested in function and structure, he saw no problem in one character doubling in two roles or in its opposite, two characters sharing one role. Thus the role of helper in this tale is filled by two characters, the father and the maid. The father also fills the role of initial dispatcher, sending his son off with the Gruagach. The role of hero is obviously played by the son (though Propp's schema will allow us to see that the father has a part here, too). Propp's eighth and last role, the false hero, does not appear in this tale.

The tale begins, as many wonder tales do, with what Propp calls a *lack* (a). In this case it is a lack of brains in the son, which makes the old fisherman fear for his wife's future. The next step (B) involves the means by which the hero leaves home. In this case he is dispatched by his father. Propp offers two possibilities here, either that the hero is active, a 'seeker,' or passive, a 'victimized hero' (36). Since the son is 'dispatched directly' by his father as the result of a 'request' accompanied 'by promises' (37) from the Gruagach, Propp would call the son a seeker.

This step is followed by step ↑, in which the hero actually leaves home. Propp recognizes difficulties here:

> It is necessary to keep the following in mind: if a young girl is abducted and a seeker goes in pursuit of her, then two characters have left home. But the route followed by the story and on which the action is developed is actually the route of the seeker. If, for example, a girl is driven out and there is no seeker, then the narrative is developed along the route of the victim hero. The sign ↑ designates the route of the hero, regardless of whether he is a seeker or not. (39)

In other words, if no one seeks the girl, she becomes the victim-heroine and still is described by ↑. But if there is a seeker, then he becomes the hero. This explanation appears to apply to our tale. The son is in effect abducted by the Gruagach at the end of the second year; the old fisherman then becomes the seeker and (temporarily at least) the hero.

Certainly we can apply Propp's functions to the father's actions.

a (lack): The parents lack their son.

B (connective): The wife as dispatcher allows the father to go in search.

G (spatial transference): With the aid of the old woman as helper, the father gets to the object of his search (his son).

M (difficult task): The father goes through the 'ordeal of choice: to select [his son] among twelve identical' creatures (61).

N (solution): The father chooses the right dove.

K (lack made good): 'A spell on a person is broken' or 'A captive is freed' (55).
↓ (return): 'The hero returns' (55).

In this case K resolves not only the parents' immediate problem but the one with which the tale began: they have their son back, and he is capable of providing for them. Nevertheless, the tale does not end here, for the simple reason that the father is not the real hero. To put it another way, his initial treatment of the son has put in motion another chain of functions in which the son becomes the hero.

Before going on to analyse the second half of the story, I should note that Propp recognizes the likelihood of one tale having sub-plots, or *moves*, as he calls them:

> Each new act of villainy, each new lack creates a new move. One tale may have several moves, and when analyzing a text, one must first of all determine the number of moves of which it consists. One move may directly follow another, but they may also interweave; a development which has begun pauses, and a new move is inserted. (92)

I would say that this tale provides a good example of interwoven moves. The tale begins with the son's voluntarily accompanying the Gruagach, but his role as hero is suspended when he is kidnapped. As we have seen, however, once he is returned, a new move with him as hero begins and is carried through.

We can now chart the son's subsequent adventures.

A (villainy): 'The villain abducts a person' (31). The Gruagach goes off with the hero as hound.
↑ (departure): The Gruagach takes the son (victim-hero) to his cave.
K (misfortune corrected): 'A captive is freed' (55), the son by the maid.
↓ (return): 'Sometimes return has the nature of fleeing' (56).
Pr (pursuit): The Gruagach and his sons pursue the son through his transformations.
Rs (rescue): 'The hero saves himself while in flight by means of rapid transformations' (57). 'He does not allow himself to be devoured' (58).
U (punishment): 'The villain is punished' (63).
T (transfiguration): 'The hero is given a new appearance' (62).
W (wedding): 'The hero is married and ascends the throne' (63).

Without distorting the plot of the tale, this schema follows Propp faithfully, even with the reversal of functions U and T.[8]

Having applied Propp's model, we are now in a position to evaluate it. My own reaction in working out the application ranged from initial confusion (until I became familiar with his thirty-one functions) to high interest (when I discovered the father as 'hero'), to frustration (as I tried to refine the schema for the father and then for the son), to a sense of accomplishment (when I finished). Looking at the result, I have to admit that the schema applies as Propp claims, though I would suggest that it repeats a function (the Gruagach abducts the son twice, both before and after the move of which the father is hero). I still feel pleased about the discovery of the father's role but am not sure that the rest of the outline has provided anything we had not already worked out without benefit of Propp. Certainly to do no more than I have just done would be to leave the tale unanalysed. But if we take Propp's schema as a framework from which analysis can proceed, I think we shall find it of further help.

Propp's model allows us to focus on the crux of the tale, the point at which the son is brought home and both lacks are made good. It forces us to ask why the tale does not end there. The answer, we saw earlier, is that the son has been cursed by the Gruagach, presumably with a need to exercise the talent for transformation that he learned from the magician. Propp's schema would automatically focus our attention on that important problem. It also allows us to ask more generally what the effect is on a tale of having two plots. When they are interwoven, as in this tale, the reader expects more coherence than if the one plot simply succeeded the other. It was not uncommon for a teller to create a new and longer tale by simply adding one type to another; that is, when a hero finished one adventure, there would be that sense of finality with which each type usually closes, but the hero would nevertheless be propelled into a new adventure. Such an added move may well be justified on psychological-thematic grounds, as we shall discover in chapter six.

The interweaving of two plots, as in 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island,' does, however, allow more complex development of both plot and theme. There the father's adventure has repercussions at several points in his later life, but these are brought about through a second interwoven plot focused on the son. As hero he saves the kingdom and finds a mate who exposes the original king's wife and two sons as unworthy.

The two plots in the Gruagach tale also have father and son as respective heroes. But in this tale the connection between the plots is at once more integrated and less fulfilled. Although the tale begins from the point

of view of the father, any reader of wonder tales knows that it will shift to the son. Yet as Propp's analysis demonstrates, this situation is a focal point of ambiguity in wonder tales. Will the son be a seeker or a victim? free himself or be freed? The fact that the fisherman seeks his son actually makes the father the hero until his search is successfully completed. This ambiguity has the effect of tying together the two experiences. After the father has brought his son home safely, the initiative shifts to the son, who then involves the father in his first adventure as a shape-shifter. In the final two-fifths of the tale, however, the mother and father are simply dropped.

In contrast, the son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island has adventures which tie him to his father in a more straightforward way. He is called on to do battle for his father; he goes on his adventure at the request of the king's wife; and he mates with a woman who clears the way for his father's marriage to his own mother. Both structurally and thematically this is a beautifully integrated tale which I find more satisfying than the Gruagach tale.

Does the structural fault cause the thematic problem that we noted in 'The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks'? Obviously the theme cannot be fully integrated unless the structure is. But equally obviously the theme of this tale is very well expressed by its structure. In other words, if we value full integration of both plot and theme, we will be disappointed with the Gruagach tale. But if we accept the validity of a theme that focuses on the hero's limited success, we have to acknowledge that this tale embodies that theme very effectively. Both theme and structure work together to cause a subtle sense of dissatisfaction with the seemingly triumphant conclusion of the tale.

In the next chapter we shall have a chance to see another fisherman's son who gains the power of self-transformation. Although the structure of the tale is different from the one we have just been considering, the two are close enough to allow us to test the question implicit in my criticism of the hero of this tale: is the process of magical self-transformation invariably corrupting, or does the outcome depend upon the nature of the hero?

3 Aspiration and Identity

BEFORE TURNING to another wonder tale with a fisherman's son as its hero, I would like to offer a mythic version of the tale of the lowly lad who gains the power to change himself into animal form. This tale comes from a primitive culture which was geographically and culturally far removed from Ireland – the north-west coast of Canada. Its mythic theme lays bare a psychological problem which we need to consider.

As we have seen in the first two chapters, the wonder-tale hero usually has a helper. In 'The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks' the hero is aided by a servant and a princess, while in 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island' the helper is a horse. When the helper is an animal, the hero is being aided by an instinctual force. And when the hero himself becomes an animal, it means he has identified, if only temporarily, with that force. In this case there is the great risk either of being taken over by the 'alien state' or of being unwilling to give up its power. The second alternative, which could apply to the fisherman's son, is considered by Marie-Louise von Franz in her Jungian study 'Dealing with Evil in Fairytales.' She claims that 'if a human being identifies with an archetypal figure,' he 'gets the life energy and even certain parapsychological gifts ... connected with the archetype.' Reluctance to lose those gifts 'is one reason why people do not like to be exorcised or re-humanized again.'[1] I would see the fisherman's son as being just such an unwilling person.

In chapter one I equated the other world of the wonder tale with the unconscious part of the mind. This connection was a topic of special concern to C.G. Jung, whose conception of archetypes was of images coming from the deepest part of the unconscious:

... the archetype has a numinous character: it exerts a fascination, it enters into active opposition to the conscious mind, and may be said in the long run to mould the destinies of individuals by unconsciously influencing their thinking, feeling, and behaviour, even if this influence is not recognized until long afterwards. The primordial image is itself a 'pattern of behaviour' which will assert itself with or without the co-operation of the conscious personality.[2]

In earlier times, Jung believed, cultures which inculcated an active belief in myths provided the conscious personality with the information necessary to cope with the power of the unconscious archetype.

In the twentieth century, Jung also believed, Western culture has become so secular that most individuals lack the psychological-spiritual beliefs that used to form such a protective, guiding system. As a result, the young person whose energy does not find an outlet in life around him may find himself overpowered by fantasies. If such

regression occurs in a young person, his own individual life is supplanted by the divine archetypal drama, which is all the more devastating for him because his conscious education provides him with no means of recognizing what is happening, and thus with no possibility of freeing himself from its fascination. (308)

The Indian tale we are about to consider may be taken as a cautionary story illustrating Jung's concern.

This Tsimshian tale was collected by the pioneering anthropologist Franz Boas and published in 1902. Like other North American Indian stories it differs significantly from the European wonder tale. Although its main plot concerns a young lad without status who wins a princess through his ability to transform himself, the ending is not at all like that of a standard wonder tale. Rather, the hero is finally compelled to give up his wife in order to fulfil the destiny of the creature he had earlier killed. As the Tsimshian perceived it, he left humanity to become a superhuman spirit or god. Despite what I said earlier about the interchangeability of the plots of wonder tales and myths, this Indian tale offers a dramatic contrast to the Irish wonder tale which will be our main focus in this chapter.

GROWING-UP-LIKE-ONE-WHO-HAS-A-GRANDMOTHER

A CHIEF saw a star fall and lodge itself in a tree. Wanting it, he offered his daughter in marriage to whoever could knock it down. A man mysteriously appeared to a lonely orphan boy and gave him coloured stones to throw at the copper star. When no one else could hit it, the boy succeeded. But others seized the copper star and claimed they had knocked it down. So the chief set another task, the killing of a white bear he had seen. Again with the man's secret advice, the boy killed the bear. Now the chief had to be true to his word. Ashamed, he moved his tribe out of the village, leaving behind his daughter, the boy, and their grandmother. (The boy's mother had been the chief's sister.)

They had no food and no one to do the hunting. The boy went to a lake and shouted. Then 'the one that had charge of the lake emerged' (*Tsimshian Texts* 148), a huge copper frog which chased the boy. The boy escaped, then laid a trap for the frog. When he next shouted at the lake and the frog chased him, he led it through a cleft tree and then knocked out the wedges so that the tree squeezed the frog to death. The boy skinned the frog, put on its skin, and found that he could swim underwater and catch trout in the lake.

He left these fish for the chief's daughter to find outside. She would not eat the trout, but she did eat the salmon he next caught in the sea. She did not realize that he had caught them until she saw him return one night; then he confessed that he put on the skin every night to catch the fish they found in the morning. She agreed to marry him, and they had two children.

After filling houses with salmon and other fish, the husband told his wife that he was very tired. She began to worry. Then her father and his people returned, starving. The husband fed them, bringing in whales and other sea mammals. He confessed to his wife that he found it difficult to take off the frog skin when he came back from fishing. He held a potlatch and was given a name, but found it even more difficult to take off the frog skin. One night he could no longer take it off; he left his family but still brought fish and sea mammals which he laid on the shore. His wife explained to the tribe what had happened and concluded, 'Now he really lives in the sea' (168).

LIKE the fisherman's son, the orphan is an unlikely lad who becomes a hero with the help of a donor. But his most important power comes from his own action in killing and skinning the frog. The consequences of that deed win him a wife and then status in the tribe. Yet the power that provides finally overpowers the human who tries to use it: he can go on providing, but he must give up his individual humanity to do it. To put it another way, his need to provide becomes so strong that it separates him from wife, children, and tribe. The frog skin is a symbol of that power, its clinging symbolic of that separation.

Also like the fisherman's son, the orphan takes on an animal shape in order to provide for his family. Both are unable to stop providing when the family has enough. The fisherman's son is then trapped by his original donor, while the orphan is trapped by the skin of the donor. Just as the orphan is caught in the role he takes on, so we could argue that the fisherman's son is also caught in the transforming role. As an extension of his apprenticeship with the Gruagach, he is forced to transform himself again and again. Unlike the orphan, he ends the tale as a human being (though a self-transfigured one), but we have doubts of his retaining that identity. Of course it could be argued that once he has killed the Gruagach, the curse is lifted and he is free to stay human. But as we have seen, he is still transforming himself even after triumphing over the Gruagach.

A more certain contrast between the two heroes is the fact that the orphan takes on animal form to help others. He is almost completely selfless (though he is pleased when the chief's daughter recognizes him: 'Now I am great. You have taken notice of me' 157–8). After the initial transformation of the fisherman's son, all his actions are based on self-preservation or -gratification. This may help explain why the fisherman's son wins only a wife and a kingdom, while the orphan's 'individual life is supplanted by the divine archetypal drama' (as Jung puts it).

We do not follow the fisherman's son into marriage and fatherhood, where the role of provider might make itself felt again. Although as a king he will not feel physical want, he may well be faced with other temptations to transform himself. But we can only speculate. In order to discover whether there are more positive possibilities open to the self-transforming hero, we need to turn now to another Irish wonder tale.

THE FISHERMAN OF KINSALE AND THE HAG OF THE SEA

A POOR FISHERMAN with seven children was unable to catch any fish. One day when he was sailing home, a beautiful lady rose up in the sea and offered him help: if he would give her his eldest son, she would bring him luck at his fishing each day. When he was reluctant, she said he could keep the lad until he was twenty-one, to which the fisherman agreed. From that moment, the fisherman caught all the fish he could eat or sell. Not only that, but 'the beautiful lady used to bring him gold twice a week' (*Irish Folk-Tales* 38).

As the eldest son, named Sean, approached his twenty-first birthday, his father became sick and heavy with worry. Under Sean's questioning, the father finally told him what he had promised. The son said,

Never mind, father; even if I go you have six sons left, and I'll do for myself, unless the lady in the sea kills me; and if she does itself, sure you can live well without me. She may not find me. Now let me have the best horse in the stable, and I'll go seek my fortune. (39)

Sean rode off until he came to a strand on which a bear, a hawk, and a hedgehog were disputing the division of a dead sheep. At their request he divided it appropriately among them and turned to go. But the bear asked him to wait 'till we give you our good wishes and a gift for the road. I will give you this power: If you are in trouble at any time, you have only to call on me and you'll be a bear in one moment' (39). The other two animals also gave Sean the power to assume their shapes.

After leaving them, Sean decided to test this power; he called on the hawk and became one. Flying across the sea, he saw a carriage on the opposite shore. He fluttered round it and was seized by the eldest of three beautiful sisters in it. She fondled the hawk and then left it in the carriage when they got out. Upon returning, this sister found the hawk gone but a handsome young man standing outside the carriage. As they talked she fell in love with him, and she invited him to take part in a contest for her hand. Sean said he would like to but that he had no horse. Since the contest involved jumping one over the high wall around her father's castle, the daughter was ready to offer him a horse, except that it was too far away to be brought in time for the contest.

When Sean said he could get there and back in time, she wrote a letter for him. He changed into a hawk again and quickly flew to the

castle of his beloved's old nurse, who owned the horse. Changing back into his own form, he could not get past the guards at the gate. After he struck the head off one guard, however, another one agreed to tell the nurse that he had a message for her. When the nurse read it, she immediately gave the horse to Sean, with the warning that there were enchanted obstacles on the way back. But she gave him a bottle with liquid which would enable the horse to clear each obstacle when they came to it. The horse galloped off powerfully. When they came to a forest of steel spikes seven miles long, Sean gave the horse a drink from the bottle, and they cleared the forest. He did the same when they came to a mountain of fire and to a wide sea.

Sean and the horse arrived back at the castle in time for the contest. *At last the hour came for trial. Some didn't rise half way to the top of the wall and fell back. Others went to the top and remained there; horses and riders were impaled on the spikes and died on them. Many a good horse and champion perished in the trial ... Sean ... put spurs on his steed and cleared the wall. He raced once around the courtyard, sprang over the wall to the outside, and let his horse go with such speed that he ran a mile from the castle before he could stop him. Sean turned back then, and said to the nobleman: 'I have your daughter won.'* (42)

The father said he would give Sean the eldest daughter's hand, but not until the other two daughters had been won by two other heroes in the same contest. At the next trial a young man did manage to clear the wall and won the middle daughter. At the last trial, another man was also successful. A triple wedding was celebrated the next day.

When the celebrations were over, Sean sent a boy out to make sure that his new horse was being properly cared for.

As he was going to the stable he saw a most beautiful lady at the door, and who should she be but the lady who rose in the sea and gave luck to Sean's father, the fisherman of Kinsale. 'Open the door before me,' said she to the boy, 'that I may enter the castle and eat of all the food and drink on the table.'

The boy looked a second time, and saw that she was the ugliest old hag that he had ever set eyes on. 'Indeed, then, I will not open the door to you, for if I let you in I'd be put out myself; you would frighten the whole company.' (43)

When the boy threatened to turn the dogs on the hag, she knocked him across the courtyard. Then he did set them on her, but before they could reach her she gave a leap to the top of a tall tree. From there she told the boy that Sean belonged to her. The boy reported this to Sean.

Sean remembered that his twenty-first year was ended that day, and made ready to meet the old hag. He drew his sword and went towards her. The moment she saw him she slipped down from the treetop, made a grasp, seized him, and rising through the air, flew away. (44)

The rest of the wedding party saw the abduction and mounted their horses to give chase. Sean's wife, on the nurse's horse, was even able to keep up with the hag until they came to the sea, into which the hag disappeared with Sean. As the wife lamented her loss, the hag's head rose out of the water. She refused the wife's request for her husband but said that she would bring him out if the wife would then go back under the sea with them. The wife agreed.

Now the hag rose out of the water, and making a leap she was outside on the strand and Sean with her and he as dry as if he'd come out of an oven. The hag made a grasp and caught her, but if she did, she let go the hold which she had on Sean. That moment he made a bear of himself and thought to kill her, but she was too quick for him. She caught the wife and sprang into the sea with her. (44)

The father finally rode up and found Sean alone. When he heard that his daughter was now a captive, he blamed Sean. Vowing to prove himself worthy, Sean rode off. Once out of sight he sent the horse back to the stable and turned into a hawk. He flew over the spot where he and his wife had been taken down to the hag's castle under the sea. Since he could see no sign, he then flew to an island with a castle on it.

Turning into a man again, he spoke with the herder and his wife, kept there by the hag. While they were talking, the hag's three ugly daughters appeared.

The eldest espied Sean. 'Bad luck to you,' cried she, 'you are not welcome to this island. My mother bought you, paid a big price for you. She made a rich man of your father so that you might be my husband, and you would not come to me, but you'll not be the better for your refusal.'

'I would rather be cut in quarters or suffer in any way than marry you, you ugly creature!' said Sean. (46)

The three sisters then angrily attacked him with their sharp claws. Sean was getting weak when he thought to turn himself into a bear. He caught one sister and tore her to pieces and then did the same to the other two.

The herder's wife praised Sean and showed him smoke rising from the sea where the hag's castle was. She told him he could go down the chimney to get in. Turning himself into a hawk again, Sean flew to the smoke. Then

he became a hedgehog and dropped down the chimney. Once inside, he turned himself back into a man and was reunited with his wife. As they discussed how to escape, the hag's servant-girl warned Sean against fighting her mistress. 'There is no man ... who can ever kill the hag. She has steel nails on her fingers seven inches in length, and every time that she raises a hand on you she will strip the flesh from your head to your heels' (47).

Soon the hag returned, and as they fought, Sean found her indeed formidable.

He knew now that he hadn't long to live unless he got assistance. He called on the bear. That minute he was a great bear, and making a rush, grasped the hag by the waist and shook her till she broke the backbone in her body. That done, he made himself a man again, and his wife threw her arms around his neck. (47)

Then the two of them looked at the riches in the castle. Sean told the servant-girl that they were hers until he came back; then he changed himself and his wife into two hawks which flew up the chimney and over to the island. He told the herder and his wife that they were free of the hag and could live in the castle; they thanked him but said they preferred the cottage they had.

Then, as hawks again, Sean and his wife flew back to her father's castle, where they changed back to human form.

The father welcomed them both. 'You are a hero,' said he to Sean, 'and I wronged you.'

'If the wife was taken from me,' said Sean, 'I brought her back from the depths of the sea.'

'You did,' said the father-in-law, 'and you must stay with me and have half of my property.'

'I will not stay. I will go to my own country,' said Sean, 'and all you need give my wife is her share, as you give her sisters.'

'I'll do that,' said the father-in-law, 'and I'll take the money to her myself in Kinsale.' (48)

Sean and his wife flew over the water to Kinsale and were welcomed by his father and mother. Soon after, his wife's father arrived with ample gold for them.

THE BEGINNING of this tale contains a particularly explicit instance of the lack or need which Propp saw as the constant premise of the wonder tale. However ugly and witchlike the hag later appears, we need to remember that she has offered a clear exchange to the fisherman and keeps

her side of the bargain without trickery. She becomes aggressive only when the fisherman doesn't fulfil his promise.

But when we consider the bargain, we realize it is a Faustian one. The sea lady is wrong to propose it, and the fisherman wrong to accept it. Though Sean benefits, he is right not to feel bound by a bargain in which he had no say. And yet it is also true that he cannot simply evade what his father agreed to. The consequences of his attempt to do so are what the tale is really about.

The first adventure Sean has involves that essential good deed which validates him as a wonder-tale hero in the reader's eyes. In this case the reward is immediate: for helping three animals by making a just division, he is given the power of transformation which allows him to take on their respective forms. Propp would term the three animals Sean's donors. His testing of this new power leads him straight into the main adventure of the tale.

Having 'the power of enchantment' (46), Sean is a free agent, the striver and later the seeker of the tale. The contest which he wants to enter involves him in the sub-plot of gaining the horse. This move, in Propp's terminology, constitutes a retarding action: he is forced to kill a guard to get the attention of the horse's owner (another donor), forced to overcome obstacles in his ride towards the magic contest that should be the culmination of his aim to marry the nobleman's daughter. Another retarding action is provided by the two further contests for the other sisters. Since these do not involve Sean and since the success of two others undercuts his own triumph in clearing the wall, this episode is in fact anticlimactic.

It is only when the marriage has been celebrated that the real conflict in the tale emerges. By chance, the end of Sean's twenty-first year comes on his wedding day. This 'coincidence' brings together the beautiful noblewoman with whom Sean has exchanged vows and the 'beautiful lady' of the sea to whom he was promised. His free choice is fulfilled on the same day as his fate overpowers him.

The sea woman turns into a hag even before she is denied by the servant-boy. Like some figure out of a nightmare, she becomes the loathsome secret from the past that undermines the happy wedding dream. The boy's threat of loosing the dogs on her provokes her first violent act, knocking the boy across the courtyard, and her act in turn provokes him actually to set the dogs on her. Thus is the pleasure of the noble wedding

feast violated. Her leap to the treetop is a gross parody of the high leap Sean has made to win his wife. The hag's next leap, down and then up into the air, seems to claim the groom as her partner. (Only later do we find he was to marry her daughter.)

In fact, the hag's winning Sean is more genuine than his winning his wife. The hag does it with her own power; Sean's winning leap was accomplished by a horse belonging to someone else. The fact that it was indirectly given by his beloved does auger well for their union, however. Although the hero's horse is frequently a helper in wonder tales, there comes a point when he must face the central conflict in his own person. Because Sean has chosen not to face the sea lady early in the tale, he is now left in a false and vulnerable position. His wife, on the other hand, mounted on her nurse's horse, is able to keep up with the hag, express her genuine feelings on the shore, and agree to the hag's terms for rejoining her husband. Her actions make possible Sean's escape; he is freed to undertake the actions by which he will destroy the hag and rescue his wife, thus resolving the conflict between his individual will and his fate.

But at the point when his wife's father finds Sean alone on the shore, his accusations have a large measure of truth in them: 'You have vexed her in some way or wronged her, and there in no high blood in you[;] if there was she wouldn't make the claim that she did, and you wouldn't let my daughter go with her' (45). Sean has wronged the hag; her claim that he belongs to her is true, and he does not have 'high blood.' I take the nobleman to be saying that only a person of low degree would have given the hag grounds for making such a claim, a shrewd and accurate inference. Sean correctly perceives that his only reply lies in action. But the father-in-law has given us a further indication of the regrettable importance and validity of the hag's position and claim.

Once again Sean becomes a hawk; on the island, he is faced with his first three antagonists, the hag's daughters, who act as her surrogates. Transforming himself into a bear, he is able to kill them and is rewarded with directions for entering the hag's castle. Flying over it, he finally uses the third form, that of the hedgehog, to enter. As on the island, he finds two allies and faces his real antagonist for the third time. The first time, in his own form, he had been helpless, and the second time, as a bear, he had not been quick enough. Now as human he is not strong enough, but as bear again he is able to give her a lethal embrace – an appropriate payment of the debt his father contracted and a definitive resolution of the conflict.

When they return to the castle, his father-in-law shows himself eager to retract the insults offered earlier: he acclaims Sean a hero and generously offers half the kingdom (indicating that Sean has earned high rank, if not 'high blood'). Sean's refusal is profoundly significant: instead of accepting the offer of half the kingdom, he will return to his father, but the nobleman can give his daughter her share. Implicit in this stand is Sean's acceptance of the earlier accusations: he does not have high blood but is not ashamed to acknowledge his father; he had wronged the hag but has since confronted and resolved that dilemma; he has of course brought back the daughter, but only to prove that he rescued her and is thus worthy of her. He asks no more than his due (to be acknowledged as hero) and hers (to be rewarded as her sisters will be).

Sean's refusal of half the kingdom makes sense when we remember that he has already offered one castle to the herder and left another in charge of the hag's servant-girl until he returns. The further implications of his wife's portion become evident when her father generously visits Sean in his own land, bringing with him 'gold enough to fill a fishing boat' (48). This gesture honours, as it were, Sean's low blood, his humble origins. It also duplicates the hag's earlier reward to his father. She gave 'him gold ... rising out of the sea ... he in the boat' (38). The father, instead of earning the gold by his own efforts, was seduced into taking it for a future exchange. The son, goaded by a just taunt of unworthiness from the nobleman, has earned the dowry, which is paid his wife but which honours their marriage.

The symmetry between the hag's action and the nobleman's extends even further. Both have three daughters, the eldest of whom is Sean's intended. The hag intends Sean for her daughter by virtue of her right to him. Sean intends to marry the nobleman's daughter by virtue of their love and his right to decide his own future. But because of his father's bargain, Sean is not a free agent on his wedding day. Only after the nobleman upbraids him is he able to rescue his wife and settle his father's debt; equally important, only then can he act out the independence this victory wins him by returning ennobled to his place of humble origin. The gift by his father-in-law demonstrates Sean's honour and wealth at the same time as it covertly tells the old fisherman that gold enters a fishing boat more honourably as the result of open self-reliance than through secret bargaining away of a family member.

But has Sean really been fully self-reliant? I have suggested that his initial winning of the nobleman's daughter depends on her nurse's horse.

Although he acquires it by killing one of its guards, that death is not the result of what I would call an heroic deed. After that Sean does attempt to fight the hag in his own form when he encounters her at the wedding and later in her own castle. He also tries to fight her daughters as a man. In none of these instances is he successful. He can defeat these threatening women only by transforming himself. Since he has earned this ability, his use of it need not impugn his victories. The question then becomes whether this 'power of enchantment' shows any signs of corrupting him.

On the strength of the character Sean demonstrates at the end of the tale, his future would seem secure. The only loose end in the tale is the existence of the servant-girl awaiting his return in the castle full of riches under the sea. But since Sean has a wife and riches enough in his native land, the attraction of that scene is unlikely to be great. I believe our conclusion has to be that, while the ability of a hero to transform himself may present grave temptations to identify with power, each hero works out his own destiny from the events which he confronts and which test his willingness to encounter the other, to show compassion, to adhere to principle.

Sean and the fisherman's son who is apprenticed to the Gruagach are alike in having no say in a bargain made by the father with a creature from the sea. But the fact that Sean is free until he is twenty-one is a key difference. The apprentice is given a much broader power of transformation than Sean is, and he is given it much earlier in life and while away from his family. His binding himself to that power is thus understandable. Sean uses his hawk transformation freely, but turns to the bear transformation only when dealing with his enemies. His firmness in asserting his integrity at the end is in marked contrast to the apprentice's need to impress the king and his daughter with music and sport. Similarly, Sean's refusal to accept half his father-in-law's kingdom, coupled with his insistence on returning to his own land, is in contrast to the apprentice's taking over his father-in-law's kingdom without a thought for his parents.

The apprentice's giving himself a handsome new human form is another indication of his decision to start anew. While the decision to return to the old is no more worthy in itself than the decision to embrace the new, the circumstances surrounding each choice tell us how to take it. If the father of the apprentice made a mistake in letting his son be taken away for good, he took responsibility for his mistake by going off to rescue his son. Sean's father is not active at all, his passive virtue being to let his

son run away from the bargain. The apprentice's father is equally infirm in letting his son persuade him to take part in the unnecessary (and unsuccessful) venture with the hound. Part of Sean's good fortune may be having a father-in-law who, in a difficult situation, speaks his mind and thus forces Sean to define himself.

One relation in which Sean and the apprentice are both fortunate is in the women they marry. Each commits herself immediately and saves her fisherman's son from his opponent. In this they are to be contrasted with the chief's daughter in the Tsimshian tale. Seeming to accept her father's feeling of shame about her connection with the orphan child, she leaves him to work out his destiny alone. The strain of success under such circumstances is too much, and he finds a means of becoming the provider that finally commits him entirely to the 'power of enchantment.' Where the Gruagach's apprentice seems attracted only to that power (and in ways that do not bode well for his future), Sean gives evidence of being able to subordinate the power to his own sense of proper relation to this world.

In this chapter and the last we have been concerned with heroes of lowly origin. In the next chapter we shall return to the other common type of wonder-tale hero, the king's son. Like his humble counterpart, he must be tested. In fact, the royal hero has to pass through an extra stage that the low-born hero has by birth: the prince must be reduced to a humble condition before he can undertake the quest that will prove his innate, as opposed to his merely circumstantial, royalty. We have seen that a key incident in 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island' is the prince's reduction to subhuman status on a lonely rock. Similarly we shall see how revealing is the means by which the hero of the next tale we shall be considering is deprived of royal position.

4 Testing the Hero

THE CONVENTIONAL view of wonder tales holds that they are more recent than myths and therefore less primitive or authentic. In chapter eight we shall look at an ancient Egyptian tale, 'The Two Brothers,' and discuss some of the historical indications that some wonder tales are older than some myths. In this chapter I would like to consider the evidence that the structure of these tales has to offer on this question. In particular we shall look at the views of a Russian structuralist, Eleazar Meletinsky, a follower (and revisionist) of Vladimir Propp, and at the expansion (and correction) of some of Meletinsky's views by a Canadian structuralist, Susan Reid.

In an interesting demonstration of the importance of marriage in wonder tales, Meletinsky contrasts its significance in the tales and in myths. He concludes, in proper dialectical fashion, that in primitive societies individual marriage was subordinate to 'the social consolidation of the tribes,' while in the later, more individualistic world of the wonder tale the low hero marries the princess 'to free [him]self from elementary societal conditions.'[1] Rather than accept this ideological interpretation, I would agree with Susan Reid, who, in a generally favourable review of Meletinsky and the Russian structuralists, points out that 'the fairytale with its inevitable happy ending of a marriage feast insists more on the communal strain than the myth does because in the living context of the myth the happy ending is always supplied by the ritual.'[2] In order to appreciate how Reid comes to this conclusion, we shall have to turn to a recent abbreviation of Propp's schema.

Meletinsky and his colleagues have demonstrated how Propp's thirty-one functions can be reduced to three stages, each a testing of the hero. In the first, which they call the preliminary test, the hero obtains some magic object or ability. This step may involve a sacrifice (the giving of food or

money), or it may be an initiation (overseen by a donor). The second or basic test is the one in which the hero uses his object or power to overcome his opponent(s). In the third test, which is optional, the hero must prove that it was he and not a false claimant who overcame the enemy. (See Appendix B for the derivation of these tests from Propp.)

Accepting this structure, Reid demonstrates its importance in a myth. 'The hero meets a supernatural being. It is fugitive or extremely horrible, and has to be tricked or forced before it yields its assistance in the hero's pursuit of supernatural power' (165). Successful, the transformed hero returns home. Reid describes the process of his reintegration into the community in terms parallel to his encounter with the monster:

> The community goes out to meet a supernatural being (the metamorphosed hero) who is fugitive, horror inspiring, and has to be tricked or forced – surrounded – before he can be tamed enough to help the community in its pursuit of supernatural power. A semantic parallel, not visible to the eye, is that the being encountered by the hero is of a dual nature, that is, it belongs both to the natural and the supernatural world and can mediate between them. When the hero meets the community ... he has also acquired a double nature and can function as a mediator between the two worlds. (165)

The tribe's meeting him in a public ceremony diverts 'the excess power which led to an inhuman state in the hero – necessary for channeling power into the "natural world" –' and converts it into 'a distribution of power which leads to the invigoration of all' (166). The final test of the hero is thus of the utmost importance in the myth. But in the wonder tale, Reid argues, its presence is not essential:

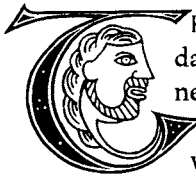
> It is easy to see how once the ritual context was lost and the strand of the communal interest had retreated into the background, the 'inhumaneness' of the hero in this scene was projected outside onto a pretender – the 'false hero.' The fairytale retains with precision a structure which is necessary to the ritual but has, in the main, forgotten the reason for this structure. From half memories and the rationalizations which make up for this loss spring many of the motifs of the tale. (159)

Remembering the end of 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island,' we may doubt that Reid's elegant conclusion does full justice to the wonder tale. The prince in that wonder tale is given his

additional test by the Queen of Tubber Tintye. The failure of the false pretenders serves to ensure both political and poetic justice, since neither is a hero or an actual son of the king. Only through their defeat (and that of the king's adulterous wife) may the 'communal interest' be satisified by the king's marrying the Queen of the Lonesome Island. It is true that the 'inhumaneness' is 'projected outside' the hero, but as much on to the Queen of Tubber Tintye as on to the pretenders. The prince's successful ride on the violent horse not only proves that he is the hero who passed the basic test by gaining entry to her castle, room, and well; it also provides him with a wife and, by wedding her to an heroic husband, turns her from a destroying to a tamed force. In short, it seems to me that this tale contains all the virtues that Reid would ascribe to myth.

We are still left with the question of what happens in the kind of wonder tale in which the 'inhumaneness' is fully projected on to the pretenders. To investigate that situation we may turn to an Irish version of the international type known as the Dragon-Slayer. After a general discussion of it we shall look at the implications of its three-test structure.

THE THIRTEENTH SON OF THE KING OF ERIN



THERE WAS ONCE a king in Erin who had thirteen sons. One day while hunting he came upon a swan with thirteen cygnets. When he saw her continually driving away one cygnet, he went home and asked his old blind sage why she would do so. The sage replied that any creature with thirteen offspring should do as the swan did. 'Let the thirteenth,' he said, '"wander for itself through the world and find its fate, so that the will of Heaven may work upon it, and not come down on the others. Now you have thirteen sons, and you must give the thirteenth to the Diachbha."' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 99). He therefore advised the king to bar the door to the last son to arrive home that night. But instead of the slowest and dullest son being last, it was the eldest and best, Sean Ruadh ('Shaun Roo,' John the Red). When the king explained his duty to his son, Sean asked for his horse and left.

After travelling a few days Sean put on some old clothes, left his horse, and took service as cowherd to a king. The next day, driving the cows out to pasture, Sean noted that the grass was better in a field next to the king's, so he pushed down the wall between and let the cows feed there.

Soon the giant to whom the field belonged came out angrily and challenged Sean to combat. As they wrestled, Sean drove the giant into the earth, first to his knees, then to his waist, and finally to his shoulders.

'Come, take me out of this,' cried the giant, 'and I'll give you my castle and all I've got. I'll give you my sword of light that never fails to kill at a blow. I'll give you my black horse that can overtake the wind before, and outstrip the wind behind. These are all up there in my castle.' (102)

Instead Sean killed him and went to his castle, where he was welcomed by the giant's housekeeper, who offered him all the giant's riches and the keys to the castle.

'Keep them till I come again, and wake me in the evening,' said Sean Ruadh, lying down on the giant's bed. He slept till evening; then the housekeeper roused him, and he drove the king's cattle home. The cows never gave so much milk as that night. They gave as much as in a whole week before. (102–3)

The next day Sean pastured the cows in another field, this one belonging to another giant who also came out and challenged Sean to fight. When Sean won, this giant also offered him a sword of light and a brown horse. Sean got the sword and cut off the giant's head with it. Again he was welcomed by the housekeeper, let her keep the keys, and slept the day in the giant's bed. The third day passed as the other two, Sean killing another giant and winning another sword, horse, and more keys.

The king was impressed with how much milk his cows were giving but did not know why. He had told Sean of the danger his daughter was in.

There was an urfeist, a great serpent of the sea, a monster which must get a king's daughter to devour every seven years. Once in seven years this thing comes up out of the sea for its meat. The turn has now come to my daughter. (101)[3]

But he 'knew nothing of the strength of Sean Ruadh, who was barefooted, ragged, and shabby' (103).

On the fourth day Sean drove the cows back to the first castle, where he 'put on the giant's apparel, black as night, and girded on his sword of light. Then he mounted the black-haired steed ... and rushing on between earth and sky' (104–5) rode to the shore where the princess sat on a rock awaiting the urfeist. A number of other royal champions were there, but being afraid of the serpent, they kept away from the princess. Sean spoke with her and asked if he might put his head in her lap until the urfeist came. She agreed to rouse him when it did. While he slept she plucked three hairs from his head. When the urfeist came, she woke Sean, who advanced on the huge creature and cut off its head with the sword of

light. But the head immediately sprang back on the serpent, which then warned Sean it would return to triumph the next day. Without further ado both Sean and the urfeist departed.

The next morning Sean drove the cows to the second castle. There he put on the giant's blue apparel and mounted the brown horse with the second sword of light in his hand. Riding to the shore, he again slept with his head in the lap of the princess. She again plucked out three hairs, which allowed her to identify him as the same hero who had appeared the previous day. When the urfeist approached, she woke Sean, who this time split the serpent down the middle. 'But the two halves rushed together, and were one as before. Then the urfeist turned to the sea again, and said as he went: "All the champions on earth won't save her from me tomorrow"' (108).

The next day Sean went to the third castle, grasped the third sword of light, and mounted a red horse. His apparel 'had as many colours as there are in the sky, and his boots were of blue glass' (108). But this time he was advised by the third housekeeper that the sword would not stop the urfeist. She gave him a brown apple, which she urged him to throw down the serpent's throat. Sean rode as before 'between earth and sky' (109) to the shore, where he slept with his head on the lap of the princess. She again plucked three hairs from his head. When the urfeist appeared this day, it opened its mouth 'big enough to swallow the world' (109). But when Sean threw the apple into its mouth, 'the beast fell helpless on the strand, flattened out and melted away to a dirty jelly on the shore' (109).

Having finally disposed of the urfeist, Sean started to ride away, but the princess, who had been in despair to see him go the first two times, clung to him this time. He would not stop, but she held 'so firmly to one of the blue glass boots that Sean Ruadh had to leave it in her hands' (109). Both the king and the princess wanted to honour the hero who had saved her, so the king held a feast that night, hoping the hero would appear. Many of the cowardly royal champions came, claiming to be the princess's saviour. The king asked his old blind sage how to determine who was the real hero. The sage said, 'Send out word to all the world that the man whose foot the blue glass boot will fit is the champion who killed the urfeist, and you'll give him your daughter in marriage' (110). The king did so, and all the champions offered themselves, but it did not fit any of them.

Finally every male in the kingdom had tried without success. The sage reminded the king that the cowherd had not tried on the boot. Although

the king did not want to, at the urging of the sage he finally sent twenty men

... who found the cowboy sleeping in the shadow of a stone wall. They began to make a hay rope to bind him; but he woke up, and had twenty ropes ready before they had one. Then he jumped at them, tied the twenty in a bundle, and fastened the bundle to the wall. (110)

The king sent twenty more men, this time with swords. But the cowherd tied them up as well. When they did not return, the blind sage told the king what had happened and what he must do.

The king went and threw himself down before the cowboy, who raised him up and said: 'What is this for?'

'Come down now and try on the glass boot,' said the king. (111)

As Sean approached the king's castle, the glass boot sprang out of the princess's window and on to his foot. The princess came down the stairs and threw herself into his arms.

The whole place was crowded with kings' sons and champions, who claimed that they had saved the princess. 'What are these men here for?' asked Sean Ruadh.

'Oh! they have been trying to put on the boot,' said the king. With that Sean Ruadh drew his sword of light, swept the heads off every man of them, and threw heads and bodies on the dirt-heap behind the castle. (111–12)

Then the king invited royalty from all Europe, Sean married the princess, and they went to live in the kingdom Sean had won from the giants.

THIS TALE begins with an overt rationale for the adventures of the hero. The sage says that one son must leave because nature considers thirteen excessive, with the strong implication that only the son's going will keep bad luck from the others ('so that the will of Heaven may ... not come down on the others'). More usually a wonder tale begins with only one son, or with two (as in the Twins or Blood Brothers, to be outlined in chapter seven), or with three (as in 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island'). This last type (the Sons on a Quest) is discussed by Meletinsky and his associates, who provide a suggestive analysis. They see three offspring as making an 'overcompleted' family causing 'sibling rivalry which ends with the consolidation of the status of one sibling.'[4] In an inverted way this logic could be applied to our tale. Because a dozen makes a stable number of offspring, the thirteenth causes 'overcompletion' and should be sent off. Given to the Diachbha (Dyee' ach vuh: 'fate' or 'divinity'), this son is deprived of what had seemed rightfully his: as

eldest and 'best, the hero of them all,' he presumably would have succeeded his father as king. A blind sage is the appropriate vehicle for this advice to give the son over to blind fate. But in fact the will of Heaven is that he go where there is more need for his heroism than there appears to be in his father's kingdom. Just as the fate is really benevolent divinity, so the sage's blindness is really a paradoxical assurance that his inner vision is true (as we discover that of the second blind sage also to be).

Sean Ruadh acts like the typical dispossessed wonder-tale character (the Goose Girl and Cinderella in Grimm are the best known). He takes the lowest position he can find and keeps it while he finds ways to stand out. Successful both as a cowherd and a giant-killer, Sean wins the disguise that will allow him to rescue the princess without being recognized. She meanwhile is doing her best to be able to recognize him again; though his hair turns out not to be the key identification, the boot she wrests from him is. Sean's backwardness after his success is as pointed as Cinderella's, or as Cinderlad's in the comparable Norwegian tale, 'The Princess on the Glass Mountain.' We will look more closely at this cinder motif in chapter eight, but we need to consider now how Sean's persistence in a low station is connected with certain revealing images and actions.

We might begin with Sean's penchant for sleeping. He sleeps after each of his fights with the three giants and before each of his bouts with the urfeist. Then when the king sends his men to have Sean try on the boot, they find him sleeping in the shadow of a stone wall. When they wake him, he ties them up. As he did before fighting the serpent, Sean sleeps before a contest which he will win. He slept in the giant's castle only after victory, but if we remember Reid's comments on the implications of that victory, we can see that it is as if he is absorbing their power in doing so. We might then speculate that he is storing power before each of his other fights.

There are two possible further functions of sleeping that I can see. One is the implication of negligence that goes with sleeping on the job. The other is an implication of disdain for the minor difficulty of overcoming a huge sea serpent or twenty of the king's men. The latter may suggest either that Sean has known from the beginning that he is properly a hero or that the excess of power won from the giants has filled him with pride. As we saw earlier, that power seemed to reside in the things of the giants which he used in approaching and vanquishing the urfeist. But it would

have to be some less tangible power that has permeated him to allow him to subdue twenty men with ropes made of hay.

The blind sage is obviously aware that the power is in Sean, that it is dangerous to the kingdom, and that the only way to neutralize it is for the king to pay homage to Sean. When the king abases himself, Sean raises him. After this Sean finally consents to be revealed as the hero: in short, he agrees to be raised from his own low position only after raising the king from his. The point may well be that the king is being invited to discover that only lowering leads to true highness. Like Sean, this king, we may presume, received his royal standing by birth. Since Sean has tasted the strength that comes from giving up an unearned high station, he may be offering the king a chance to do the same.

As discussed by Victor Turner, this interchange is an important one. 'The high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low.' Sean can be seen, with the aid of Turner's helpful analysis, as one who has undergone an initiation: 'His subsequent power is thought to spring partially from this profound immersion in humility.'[5]

Another way of viewing Sean's treatment of the king may also apply to his treatment of the pretenders and those who come to bind him: he may be taking revenge on those who did not recognize and acknowledge his heroism (we have been told that the princess acknowledged it from the first). Those who try to usurp his heroism receive the worst treatment. Not only does he kill them; he throws their corpses 'on the *dirt-heap behind* the castle.' Accepting the polar nature of the wonder-tale world, we may conclude that such denigration is appropriate to those who claim to be higher than they are. Sean's use of the sword of light on them is another proof that he is the genuine hero and they the cowardly false claimants.

Connected with the high-low poles I have been suggesting are images of darkness and light which reinforce the theme of the tale. Taking dark colours as low (dirty, earthy) and light colours as high (connected with sun and sky), we may note that the first two horses are black and brown. But they are able to carry Sean 'between earth and sky.' Sean's own apparel is at first black, then blue, and finally 'as many colours as there are in the sky.' I would suggest that we have here a progression in apparel that parallels Sean's movement from low cowherd to revealed hero. His raised sword of light is the apex of this progression. (Similarly, we saw the

princely son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island, after dwelling in lowness on a rock in the sea, raised so high on a magic horse that he could cut with his sword under the sun.)

I would further suggest that the source of Sean's power is darkness, which he needs to experience and is willing to experience each time he desires to be raised up into the light. It is therefore appropriate that he bury each giant in the earth before killing him. It is also appropriate that he go to sleep, close his eyes, enter darkness before each of his encounters with his most powerful opponent, the urfeist. This pattern is nicely reinforced in the description of the king's twenty men finding him 'sleeping in the *shadow* of a stone wall.'

We may now step back for the kind of overview provided by Meletinsky's three-stage testing scheme. We can see Sean's fight with the giants as the first stage: by triumphing over them, he passes the introductory test that determines his right to own the deadly swords, not to mention the apple with which he passes the second, basic test of killing the serpent. The fact that there are three giants and three appearances of the urfeist does not influence the question of what stage we are dealing with. Both tests simply have three parts, in that tripling of effect that is so common in the wonder tale.

Our main focus at this point needs to be on the third stage, the additional test which certifies Sean as indeed the hero of the basic test. In this case, as Reid suggests, we do have a certain 'inhumaneness' in the hero being 'projected on to' the pretenders. Like the burning of the false queen in 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island,' the cutting off of the heads of the pretenders may strike us as excessive violence. Reid speaks of the hero's encounter with the supernatural leaving him with 'an excess of power which led to an inhuman state.' In the Indian myth that Reid discusses this power is not expressed in individual violence but is dissipated by being ceremonially distributed for 'the invigoration of all' the community. Her contrast between the violence which may end the wonder tale and the integrating social distribution which may end the myth seems valid in the case of this tale. Whether the additional test is accompanied, as Reid also claims, by 'rationalizations' to justify the violence in the wonder tale is a question that demands closer scrutiny of 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin.'

In Reid's mythic example, the preliminary test provides the hero with supernatural power for triumphing in the basic test, and the same is true

in this wonder tale. First, to dismember the serpent, Sean gains the 'sword of light,' a weapon frequently won by Irish heroes. Its ability to sever a huge sea serpent into two separate halves testifies to its supernatural power. Second, to get to the shore Sean gains a horse that can ride 'between earth and sky' – presumably, off the ground. Third, to pass the last stage of the basic test Sean is given a magic apple by one of the giants' housekeepers. One of the prizes he wins in the preliminary test also enables him to pass the additional test: the glass boot which springs from the window on to his foot. There can be no doubt then that the fruits of his success on the preliminary test are supernaturally potent and tailored to the subsequent tests.

As a further indication that Sean has taken on the supernatural power of his opponents, we should note his ability to wear the apparel of each giant on his three encounters with the princess and the urfeist. This appropriation is reminiscent of the Indian lad who kills the frog and appropriates its supernatural power by putting on its skin. Like that youth, Sean seems lowly, a 'bare-footed, ragged, and shabby' cowherd. But also like the Indian, he is in reality the saviour of the princess. The Indian's action are more mundane, providing food (though we could note that Sean brings back from the giants' field cows which give seven times the milk they gave before). But the key distinction, as Reid would point out, is that the Indian spreads his supernatural power in the form of largesse to all the tribe. Sean, being unable to do this, as Reid would argue, has to discharge that power destructively, appropriately on the serpent but less so on the pretenders.

Before inquiring whether it was inappropriate for Sean to kill the false champions, I would like to point out the consequences of the Indian lad's taking on his role of provider for the tribe. He gets locked into the frog skin and the supernatural power it provides. In Jung's analysis, the lad is assimilated to the archetype of the collective unconscious. In other words, the mythic resolution aids the community at the expense of the individual. Keeping in mind the danger in taking on the power at all, we may look at the wonder-tale hero's handling of it in a more sympathetic light.

First we may remind ourselves that there are pretenders in the Indian tale. They also try to claim credit for the deeds which entitle the lad to marry the princess. The difference is that he does not kill them. But he does shame them when they (and the rest of the tribe) return starving and must depend on him for food. From this point of view, I would

suggest that the wonder tale is simply more direct in its handling of the problem. It could even be argued that shaming the dishonest is a sublimation of aggression, more subtle and less 'primitive' than fighting them. In contrast, Meletinsky might argue that shaming by feeding causes communal integration, whereas killing shows destructive individualism. Personally, I cannot see anything to choose between two such speculative arguments that one pattern is more antique than the other.

At the beginning of this chapter I mentioned Meletinsky's stress on the presence of primitive marriage laws and customs in the structure of wonder tales. He insists that such tales are more concerned with marriage ceremonies than they are with initiation rites, which he sees as embodied in myths ('Marriage in Folktales' 65–6). I find this attempt at dichotomy unconvincing. (In 'Problems of the Analysis of Fairytales,' the monograph written with several colleagues, Meletinsky admits that the first stage of the three-test structure we have been using is likely to take the form of an initiation.) All wonder tales involve contact with the other world, if not an adventure there, then a supernatural transformation in this world. As discussed by the Rees brothers in their perceptive and fascinating study, *Celtic Heritage*, 'every experience of the Other World is in a sense both an initiation and a marriage' (297): as marriage it brings together a representative of each world; as initiation it introduces the novice to a hidden world of power. To conclude this chapter, I would like to consider the relation between such an initiation and the society in which it occurs.

In order to bring out some of the more specific patterns of initiation in archaic times, I propose to consider an incident in the early life of an indigenous Irish hero, Cu Chulainn (Coo hull' in). The epic hero of early Irish manuscripts, Cu Chulainn while still a boy determines to live an heroic life no matter what the cost. When the Druid says that to take arms on a certain day will ensure a short life but one whose fame will surpass that of all other Irish heroes, Cu Chulainn immediately chooses that day and goes off to prove his bravery. Riding out of his own province, Ulster, into enemy territory, he attacks the three supernatural sons of Nechta (Nyech' ta), the most redoubtable opponent of his king, Conchobar (Con' a her). Having defeated them, Cu Chulainn bears their bleeding heads back to Ulster. Instead of rejoicing when they see his chariot approaching, the king's councillors become upset and declare, 'If measures be not taken to receive him prudently, the best of Ulstermen must fall by his hand' (*Ancient Irish Tales* 151). In order to keep him off until they may

cool his battle ardour, the councillors send out a number of women with bared bosoms, depending on his excessive modesty to deflect any violence. When he covers his eyes with his hands, courtiers are able to approach, seize, and immerse him in vats of cold water. The first vat boils away; the second becomes excessively hot; but after the third he can be presented to the king without fear of bloodshed.

Georges Dumezil, a structuralist scholar of Indo-European mythology, points out the importance of this episode:

> The condition that the exploit has effected in Cu Chulainn, this transfiguring rage, is in itself a good thing. Produced once, it is the state, or rather the faculty of recovering the state along with certain of the 'forms' in which it is expressed, that will account for the incomparable value of the hero and will permit him to conquer his enemies as he first conquered the three sons of Nechta. But this *ferg* [fervour] is as troublesome as it is precious: the child is not its master; on the contrary, it possesses him. Coming back ... before assuming his new role as ... protector, he constitutes a public menace. His ardor must be cooled, and it is to this end that the king applies the two 'medications': first, the spectacle of the nude women, which constrains him to avert his eyes, and then the immersion in the vats, which finally calms him.[6]

Dumezil argues that the episode is in fact 'the literary transposition of an authentic initiation sequence' (135). As an example he cites the northwest – coast Kwakiutl initiation into the society of cannibals. After a long solitary retreat, the novices return to the Indian village, attacking everyone they meet, supposedly tearing off strips of their flesh. (In older times they were even allowed to kill and eat slaves.) Then the tribal healers appear:

> One seizes one of the Cannibals by the head, drags him toward a basin of salt water, and plunges him into it four times. At each submersion the Cannibal struggles, splashes, and menacingly cries out 'Hap! Hap!' that is to say, 'Eat!' But the last bath calms him and he can go back to his house. (136)

Dumezil also points out an even closer parallel in a Roman legend: Horatius for his king defeats the three most powerful heroes of Alba but afterwards cannot stop himself from killing his own sister (because she has

expressed grief at the death of one hero, whom she loved [22–3]). Dumezil sees the Roman legend as a later development of the Celtic epic:

> Once the *furor* which had been the savage ideal and the grand manner of the ... warriors of prehistory ... had been depreciated for the sake of legionary discipline, the scenes of the narrative, while retaining their order of succession, were articulated differently, took another point of attack. Passions of the soul took the place of mystical forces; a justified and almost reasonable anger, provoked from without and following the exploit, was substituted for the physical and spontaneous exaltation of the entire being in the course of the exploit. (10)

Presumably he would discount in a similar way the tale-type of the Dragon-Slayer. Sean's slaughter of the pretenders might thus be attributed to genuine furor, but the fact that they make false claims of heroism would be discounted as a late rationalization for his deed. As I suggested in considering Reid's similar contention, such attempts to find an ur-form for a narrative are at best speculative.

But another facet of Dumezil's researches does add a dimension to our proper concern in this book. Looking at the Nordic berserkers, he notes the etymology of their name, 'bear sark,' 'having a bear envelope' (141). He therefore traces primitive warrior fury to 'animal furor' (142). In analysing 'The Fisherman of Kinsale and the Hag of the Sea' we noticed the violence of the hero, Sean, in his bear transformation. I find Dumezil's point suggestive. Using his initiation-model loosely, we might say that Sean proves himself worthy of the princess by her father's public standard when he jumps the wall (on a borrowed horse). But because of the transformation powers he has earned on his preliminary test with the three animals, he has a greater potential than the official test allows for (he uses only his bird form to get the horse). His basic test will not come until he has to use all three forms available to him, the hawk to fly over the hag's castle, the hedgehog to drop down its chimney and the bear to break the hag's back.

Earlier, while in his bear form, Sean tears the hag's daughters to pieces. Such 'animal furor' can also be seen in the other fisherman's son, who becomes a fox in oder to tear off the heads of the twelve cocks and who even earlier warns his father that in his horse transformation 'I'll open my mouth trying to kill and eat every man that'll come near me.' Such cannibalism is appropriately primitive; learning to control and direct this

violence may be part of what the son gains during his two-year initiation into the supernatural.

In 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin' we do not find animal furor or cannibalism, but we do find battle ardour that appears to need an outlet. Taking the tale as an initiation, we can see Sean as not only defeating the giants but taking on their supernatural power by sleeping in their beds, wearing their apparel, and using their steeds and weapons. Using this power against the even more hostile and supernatural sea serpent could be said to confirm Sean in its use. Dumezil might argue that the battle fervour possesses Sean, making him a public menace. Society may be trying to cool this ardour as it did Cu Chulainn's by tying Sean up and exposing him to the princess. Although I would assert that the tale concerns both initiation and marriage patterns, I have tried to show how it is more individual than any archetypal model. When the blue glass boot jumps on to Sean's foot, we have clear evidence of the continuing vitality of his relation to the supernatural (the boot having belonged to a giant). We can also see it, of course, as operating more destructively in his killing the false claimants. I have argued that this violent act is perfectly comprehensible within the context of the tale.

Unlike the mythic and epic heroes, Sean appears to have attained through his initiation an ability to control the power that has come to him. There is a convincing scene in which he learns the limits of power and fervour: he is shown by a female (the giant's housekeeper) that a small apple may kill a large urfeist better than an heroic sword could. And there is a clear sign that he has learned to control his power: when the men come to take him to the king, he does not try to kill them (though the second group have swords). Rather, he ties them up, thus clearly distinguishing between the rightness of underlings obeying a friendly ruler and the wrongness of suitors pretending they have done what they did not do and won what they have not earned. The positive theme underlying the tale I have already suggested. Just as Sean, the proud eldest son of a king, has to learn humility to be worthy of supernatural power, so the king proves himself worthy by humbling himself, and the suitors prove themselves unworthy by trying to elevate themselves through deceit.

The process by which Sean gains power is thus relatively clear. Like the mythic hero, he uses it to destroy evil and gain a bride, two steps that reinvigorate the community. We saw in chapter one how the pagan

Celtic idea of the 'act of truth' has a place in the wonder tale. I would argue that the same primitive notion justifies Sean's treatment of the false claimants. Far from being a rationalization, this deed is an integral part of the tale. We saw that such claimants are also present in the myth, but only in the wonder tale are they given the justice demanded by their attempt to become unworthy rulers. Since the success of any one of them in this aim would have caused harm to the community and the land, in Celtic belief Sean's disposing of them is another aspect of his slaying the serpent which also 'desired' the princess. It is a purging which affirms the rightness of that process of steadfastness in abasement and exaltation which Sean has lived out to achieve his destiny.

One source of the difference between the wonder-tale hero and the epic hero is the fact that the wonder-tale audience is usually lower class, the epic audience upper class. Even granting this social fact, the two types of tale will often share many premises and motifs. A situation or a character used by one may be taken up by the other. Yet the two forms do differ, and in the difference lie some important clues as to the nature of the wonder-tale hero. We shall consider these differences again in the next chapter, where we shall look at two more exploits of Cu Chulainn.

5 Love and Violence

AS WE SAW in the last chapter, the excess of violence which characterizes the social reintegration of both the epic and the wonder-tale hero may well owe its origin to primitive initiation rites. The connection of violence with sex and love, which I shall be developing in this chapter, may be looked at from the perspective of developmental psychology, as I shall demonstrate in taking up Freud's views on infant sexuality.

The differences between epic and wonder-tale heroes are nowhere so evident as in their relations with women. As our example of an epic hero, we shall again focus on Cu Chulainn. Besides his winning the princess Emer (Ay' ver) for his bride, he encounters at least seven other women; though some of them are desirable, he resorts to violence with all of them. I propose to examine two of these encounters: the first offers a good contrast with 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin' and the second with 'The Blue Scarf,' the wonder tale we shall be considering later in this chapter.

While returning to Ireland from further training (and initiation) as a warrior, Cu Chulainn comes to some islands on Samain (Sov' in) – that is, All Hallows' Eve – and finds that the king's daughter, Dervorgil (Der vorr' gil), is to be left on the shore 'as tribute to the Fomorians' (*Ancient Irish Tales* 169). He joins her on the strand and kills the three Fomorians (Fo morr' ians) who come for her. Offered her hand by her father, Cu Chulainn refuses but says, 'If it please her, let her follow me this day year to Erin; there she shall find me' (169). A year later Cu Chulainn goes to the coast of Ireland where he had landed, to see if she has come; he finds only two birds on the water. Cu Chulainn slings a stone at them and wounds one bird. But when he and his charioteer go down to the water, the birds are transformed into Dervorgil and her maid. Upon her complaint at this

treatment, Cu Chulainn sucks the stone out of Dervorgil's wound and then says, 'I cannot wed thee now ... for I have drunk thy blood' (170). He persuades her to marry instead a companion, being himself already betrothed to Emer.

Dumezil would probably add this to his list of warrior-initiation rituals. Like Horatius's experience it includes the vanquishing of three opponents (the Fomorians) and the subsequent harassing of a young female who has been offered as tribute to the three. Horatius kills his sister, a close blood-relation. Cu Chulainn merely harms (though intending to kill) a woman whom he then ritually makes into a blood-relation.

The first part of this tale is very close to the tale of the Dragon Slayer. But instead of a dragon, Cu Chulainn has three opponents whom he defeats in individual combat. MacCana notes that the name 'Fomorians' means 'under-demons' (*Celtic Mythology* 61). Their appearance at Samain certainly certifies them as supernatural. This tale also shares with our version of the Dragon Slayer, 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin,' the problem of recognition. At the point where they are being rescued, neither woman can see her saviour's face. Where the princess identifies Sean by plucking hairs from his head and a glass boot from his foot, Dervorgil uses a bandage she had made for Cu Chulainn's wrist. In addition, in both tales the rescued princess has difficulty keeping her saviour. Despite his promise to return, Cu Chulainn is obviously reluctant to become involved with Dervorgil, as his aggression and subterfuge demonstrate. In contrast, Sean's reluctance seems to rest on a need for a fuller recognition.[1]

Cu Chulainn turns out to have a penchant for attacking birds. After his marriage to Emer, he becomes involved in a much more serious entanglement than the one with Dervorgil. While waiting to celebrate Samain, the court of Ulster sees a flock of birds hovering over a nearby lake. The birds are so beautiful that all the women wish for them, the king's wife desiring 'one of them upon each of my two shoulders' (*Ancient Irish Tales* 177). When Cu Chulainn is sent for, he brings down the whole flock. There are enough so that every woman is able to have a pair except Cu Chulainn's wife. 'A little while after this they saw two birds flying over the lake, linked together by a chain of red gold' (178). Cu Chulainn pursues this pair and becomes involved in a supernatural adventure.

Birds connected by a chain were so well known as a symbol of an other-world transformation that Cu Chulainn's charioteer warns him not to pursue the pair. Refusing to listen, Cu Chulainn throws his spear

through the wing of one of the birds. Immediately both fly beneath the lake, and Cu Chulainn, resting his back on a nearby pillar, falls into a deep sleep. In a vision he then is approached by two women who laugh and give him alternate strokes with a horsewhip. They keep this up 'until he was all but dead' (179). When he wakes, he asks to be taken to a sick bed and for a year speaks with no one.

On the next Samain, a man comes to Ulster and promises to cure Cu Chulainn. Then the hero finally tells his comrades what has happened, and King Conchobar (Con' a her) advises him to go back to the pillar where he had his vision. When he does, one of the two women appears with a message from Fann (Fonn), who came in the form of a bird the year before to declare her love for Cu Chulainn. We are to assume that his wounding her thwarted that intention, but now Fann's husband, Labraid (Lou' ri), offers to give Fann as wife to Cu Chulainn if he will help Labraid fight off his enemies. After some delay, Cu Chulainn goes to the other world and is instrumental in slaughtering Labraid's enemies.

After the battle, Cu Chulainn sleeps with Fann and stays with her for a month. Then he leaves to go back to Ulster, promising to meet her again there for a tryst. But Emer hears of their plan and comes to the tryst with knives and fifty women to back her. Cu Chulainn protects Fann, praising her to Emer. In reply Emer claims she is as worthy of praise but bemoans the loss of Cu Chulainn's affections. This causes Cu Chulainn to choose Emer, at which point the sea god Manannan Mac Lir (Monn' en en Mock lir') appears and offers to take Fann, who goes with him.

Contrasting this adventure with Fann to the earlier one with Dervorgil, we should note that Cu Chulainn as mortal hero is able to stave off Samain encroachment of other-worldly intruders (the Fomorians) in the earlier episode, while he later obtusely mistakes other-worldly visitors for this-worldly creatures during another Samain season. In both cases a woman who loves him transforms herself and another woman to go seek him as birds. The fact that Dervorgil is able to take on bird form indicates that she must have some supernatural power, though less than Fann does (since Fann shows no wound after being struck by the spear). Cu Chulainn is in the superior position from the start with Dervorgil, rescuing her, wounding her, repairing her wound, and marrying her to another.

In seeming contrast, Fann is the superior one in her relations with Cu Chulainn. When struck by him, she returns to exact a long-lasting and debilitating revenge. But when Cu Chulainn arrives in the other world, the balance seems to shift.[2] Although Fann gives him a special welcome on

his arrival, Cu Chulainn's response is to Labraid: 'What is there now set for us to do?' (191). Labraid answers, and they go out immediately to fight. As always with Cu Chulainn, combat takes precedence over love and sex.

The mingling of aggression, sex, and love is also important in the wonder tale, as we shall see shortly when we consider 'The Blue Scarf.' But the conclusion of the wonder tale is quite different. Although in 'The Blue Scarf' we shall see another overt combat between the wonder-tale hero and a woman in animal form, once he triumphs, both are equally keen to mate, and she helps him in his future trials. The difference lies in the different concerns of the two literary forms: the epic is concerned with heroes and their martial deeds. The initiation they undergo and their subsequent distrust of women is quite appropriate to the social function they fulfil and the aesthetic pattern of their adventures. Dumezil argues convincingly for the tenacity of this literary pattern of intiation leading to violence which must be cooled. But I would still resist any attempt to set up the pattern as an archetype and then automatically denigrate or imply limitation in any variation from it. What is always necessary is a sympathetic analysis of the particular narrative.

The oral wonder tale is just as likely to have an antique version of the pattern as is an oral epic. Some tale-types appear to demonstrate remarkable stability over hundreds of years. Of the Magician and His Pupil – the type of which the Gruagach tale is a faithful representative – Thompson says, 'the details ... remain remarkably constant wherever it is told' (*Folktale* 69). The tale-type we are about to look at, the Prince and the Armbands, has a less constant plot, and unlike the Magician and His Pupil or the Twins (see chapter seven) it cannot be traced to India or Egypt, so its antiquity cannot be so easily attested. Although its use of magic healing is traditional, its articulation of plot and integrity of theme are what make it impressive.

THE BLUE SCARF OF STRENGTH[3]

THERE WAS ONCE a poor woman who had to beg for her living. She had one son named Jack who went with her and sometimes got himself in trouble by stealing things. He once was caught by a giant from whom he had taken a silver cup; he would have been hanged but for his mother's crying

and begging for his life. One day on their travels Jack and his mother saw a beautiful blue scarf hanging from a tree. Jack wanted to take it, but his mother would not let him. When they stopped later, however, Jack slipped back and got the scarf, which he wound round his body under his clothes so his mother would not see it. He discovered that he had the strength of a thousand men.

Night came, and they were near a giant's castle. Despite his mother's fears, Jack insisted they go lodge there. He pushed with his shoulder against the castle wall, which gave way 'with a noise like thunder.' (*Well* 67). The giant came down to kill the boy, 'but Jack advised him that it was better for him not to try. "For," says he, "when I knocked in your wall as easy as that, it would take me small time, and give me small trouble, to knock yourself in." The Giant, he got afraid and began to tremble' (67). Thus intimidated, the giant provided Jack and his mother with fine food and his best beds.

The giant had a grand vizier who advised him to test Jack's strength further. The giant therefore challenged Jack to a sledge-throwing contest. The giant threw it three miles, but Jack threw it six. Then Jack asked the giant to stay while he went to the sledge and threw it back. Fortunately for the giant, he realized his danger at the last minute and jumped aside, the sledge landing right where he had been standing. The grand vizier then advised the giant to marry Jack's mother as the only way of forestalling the son's evident intentions. The giant did, and Jack made no more attempts on his life.

When Jack's mother was a year married to the Giant, she got very, very fond of him. And then the Grand Vizier advised the Giant that a good way to get rid of Jack was to get his mother to consent to take to her bed and pretend she was going to die and say that nothing could save her life except a strip from the back, and a strip from the belly, of the hide of the Black Bull of the Forest – and to ask Jack to get them for her. Now, the Black Bull of the Forest was the wildest, wickedest beast in the world; and the strongest, moreover. (68–9)

The mother agreed, and Jack went. But he

... had not rightly reached the Forest till the Bull had smelled his coming, and raised a roar that shook the stars in the sky. Then he gave one suck of his breath, and instantly sucked into his mouth birds, bushes, animals, and insects, everything within three miles – except Jack. Jack planted his heels in the ground and never budged. (70)

The bull charged Jack, who caught it by the horns and 'smashed its life out against a rock' (70).

Disappointed but not daunted, the grand vizier advised the giant to have Jack's mother send him on another quest. This time it was for 'a powdered nail from a toe of the tenth Black Cat on the Island of the Ten Black Cats – where no man ever went before and came back alive, but was torn in inches by these enchanted wild beasts' (70–1). Not only were there ten cats, but each had ten lives. Jack therefore had a long, hard battle with them:

Every time he killed a cat it came to life again, till he had killed every cat ten times. And the tenth time each cat was killed, it instantly turned into a beautiful young damsel; and the tenth, and last, was the most beautiful of them all. And it's happy they were, and grateful and thankful to Jack for disenchanting them. The tenth damsel was so beautiful that Jack fell instantly head over heels in love with her, and he stayed there till he had courted and married her. (72)

Then he remembered his quest and asked his wife for the nail from one of her toes which he took back to his mother.

Disappointed again, the grand vizier and the giant determined to send Jack on a third dangerous quest. This time it was for 'an apple that grew on the Crooked Tree on the Island of the Nine Black Dogs, an Island to which no man ever went before and came back alive' (73). Agreeing to help his mother yet again, Jack first returned to the island where his wife was. She tried to dissuade him, but when she could not, gave him a magic boat to get to the Island of the Nine Black Dogs and a magic ball of yarn to get back.

The boat quickly took Jack to the Island.

There, Jack climbed the Crooked Tree, and had just plucked the apple when he heard a roar that shook the earth and rent the skies, and he saw coming toward him Nine Black Dogs, every one of them the same size of a bull, fire darting from their eyes and their nostrils, their mouths foaming. (74)

Jack jumped down to fight, but he found them even more formidable than he had the cats.

After a long and hard fight, the Nine Black Dogs were on the point of overcoming and devouring him, when, remembering his ball of yarn which he had in his pocket, he threw it from him over the ocean, and it made a bridge ten thousand miles long to the Island of the Cats, and over the bridge he bounded with the speed of the wind, and all the Nine Black Dogs followed close at his heels. (75)

On his wife's island, Jack regained strength and was able to kill each dog nine times, after which each became a handsome young man. Grateful for being disenchanted, the young men were happy to marry the nine beauti-

ful maidens whom Jack had previously disenchanted. Jack then took the apple he had picked back to his mother.

Now the grand vizier and the giant realized that dangerous quests would not work. The giant therefore set Jack's mother to get from her son the secret of his strength. When Jack told his mother of the blue scarf which he had wound round his body, she asked him to wind it around her head to give her needed strength. He did so and thus became no stronger than an ordinary man. 'The Giant and His Grand Vizier were in the highest delight when they found out this. They very soon overcame Jack. They put out his sight, and threw him down in a cave, where he should starve and die' (77). But Jack did not starve. He was fed by a poor slave whom he had once saved from a beating by the giant.

When Jack had been absent a year, his wife, who had meanwhile given birth to their child, came looking for him. The slave directed her to the cave, and she took on the task of supplying Jack with food.

One day she came across a ram whose sight was out; and, thinking of her own poor Jack, she became very kind and good to the ram ... One evening ... the ram stumbled and fell into a well by the side of the road, because it didn't see its way. In great alarm she ran and pulled the ram out of the well. And behold you! the instant that she got the ram out of the well, the ram had its sight again! For this well happened to the the Well of All-Healing. (78)

Overjoyed at her discovery, the wife with the aid of the slave brought Jack to the well, put him in it, and thus restored his sight.

From the slave, Jack learned that the giant now had the blue scarf of strength but that he tied it around his bedpost at night. The slave stole it from there one night and gave it to Jack; he put it on and marched to the castle where a ball was in progress. The doorkeeper, 'a big, wild, ugly, fierce Giant' (81), tried to keep Jack out, but Jack grabbed him by the ankles and 'smashed, knocked down, and killed every Giant that was there. Then he took his Blue Scarf of Strength, and put it around his wife, and put an iron flail in her hand. He set her to flail the Giants' wives – his own mother among the rest – for richly she deserved it' (81). The wife cleared the giants' wives out of the country.

Jack divided the giant's kingdom in two and gave the poor slave his choice. He and his wife took the other half and lived happily ever after.

AN IMPORTANT CLUE to the theme of this tale is the way it deviates from Meletinsky's three-test structure. Jack gets the blue scarf early in the

tale, and it helps him pass the basic tests set by his mother. But to say this is to raise a whole series of questions: shouldn't the basic test be against the giant? is his killing the giant at the end perhaps an additional test? why does his mother set the tests? To try to answer the last question is to go back to the beginning of the tale and discover that there is no preliminary test. (Jack gains the magic belt not by passing a test but simply by finding it and taking it.)

Since the absence of the preliminary test is very rare, we need to look a little more closely at this point. The test usually appears in an overt form, as when the fisherman's son is apprenticed to the Gruagach or when Sean, the other fisherman's son, helps the three animals. Sometimes, however, the test is more covert: all that the hero is called upon to do is show sympathy or share his wealth or his food with the creature or person who then offers him help or gives him a magic object or power. But there is not even this to be said of Jack's gaining the scarf. Instead, Jack's is a negative act; he disobeys his mother. Unlike the son who starts with his mother's blessing on adventures that we know will have a positive outcome, Jack begins with a secret opposition to his mother, which we can see reflected in her subsequent, equally hidden opposition to him. Jack's basic test is thus passed under a cloud. Although he wins the bride at the third stage of this test, he is doomed to lose the power that he has gained by breaking his mother's initial prohibition.

I would argue that this cancellation means Jack must go through the test sequence again and that he does so in the second half of the tale. After he is blinded, we discover that Jack has done that good deed which is the covert version of the preliminary test. Jack protected a slave from physical harm, and this low character repays him not with power, but by becoming his helper, first by saving him from starvation and then by stealing back the belt. From the second half of the tale emerges a pattern the reverse of the usual wonder-tale progress of the hero. In 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin' the hero first suffers lowered status and then is elevated, but in 'The Blue Scarf' Jack first gains power and displays it publicly, then has his status lowered. This humiliation is one stage in an initiation process. Where the son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island is immersed in the sea before being isolated on a deserted island, Jack again reverses the sequence: he is isolated before being immersed in the healing water of a well.

The well of healing appears frequently in the ancient Celtic tales. For instance, as part of the preparation for the Second Battle of Moytura, the

leech promises that he will be responsible for healing any of the warriors who are wounded. He accomplishes this feat by singing spells with his two sons and daughter 'over the well named Slane. Now their mortally wounded men were cast into it.' When they emerge, they are whole, 'through the might of the incantation of the four leeches who were about the well' (*Ancient Irish Tales* 42). Ross contends that the early Celtic people regarded wells as entrances to the other world (*Pagan Celtic Britain* 24–5). Besides healing, their water could provide wisdom.[4]

Jack's immersion in the well can be seen as signalling both his renewal and the completion of understanding he has gained of the inimical forces he must face. Unlike Cu Chulainn, he emerges from the immersion not neutralized as a danger to his kin but resolved to exact vengeance on them. In fact, since the kin are actually the enemy, we could say that Jack's pattern reverses Cu Chulainn's, putting immersion before the crucial battle ardour. The last part of the tale thus contains a second and this time successful sequence of tests. If Jack's protecting the slave is a preliminary test, then his finally killing the giant is the basic one.[5] His wife's flaying Jack's mother completes the necessary expulsion of evil and warrants them as equally strong rulers of the kingdom.

Jack's relation to his wife is different from the one we have seen in many wonder tales. Although he transforms her back into human shape, there is no emphasis on the search of one for the other. He goes to the island of black cats on a quest which unexpectedly involves transformation and mating. More important, Jack's meeting his wife as an antagonist allows us to draw a parallel with Cu Chulainn's relation to women. When Dervorgil and Fann appear to him as birds, Cu Chulainn attacks them. Although Fann came out of love for Cu Chulainn, his hostility provokes her to punish him; but they finally do become lovers. Jack's relation with the black cat is more straightforward. After killing it ten times, he has disenchanted a woman who then becomes his faithful wife. The important difference is that Dervorgil and Fann have the magic power to take on bird form voluntarily, while Jack's wife was a victim glad to have been attacked when she was in animal form. Jack is reclaiming the transformed back to the natural. Cu Chulainn often tried to manipulate the supernatural for his own 'natural' ends. Jack's similar use of supernatural power is of the blue scarf, which we shall investigate later.

We need now to look at Jack's adventures more specifically in connection with the problem of violence. Because it is conventional that giants are evil, the reader is rather pleased than upset that Jack is able to

intimidate the giant into offering food and lodging. Similarly, the giant's setting up a weight-throwing contest is 'asking for trouble,' which he gets. But Jack's attempt on the giant's life has an unexpected result: instead of dying, the giant becomes Jack's stepfather. In this way he reverses their positions: Jack can no longer attempt to kill him, but the giant can now manipulate Jack's mother in ways that threaten Jack's life. Like Jack's attempt on the giant's life, however, these attempts also backfire on their perpetrators.

On his quests Jack's destructiveness is given an appropriate outlet. In the black bull Jack encounters a surrogate of the giant, 'the wildest wickedest beast in the world,' which Jack kills by swinging it around his head and smashing the life out of it, much as he later kills the giants by swinging one 'wild ... fierce' one around until they all are 'smashed' dead. His victory over the ten black cats involves a superfluity of slaughter, ten times ten deaths. Yet the end-result is life, the transformation of each cat back into a human being. His falling in love with the tenth, marrying her, and fathering a child also put Jack back in touch with the feeling and relating side of his nature.

But Jack is not yet free of the consequences of his previous acts. In his first two quests there was no doubt of his triumphing. On his last quest he would have been killed if his wife had not supplied him with an escape route back to the island, where Jack's full strength now lies. Again the consequence of his killing (nine times nine) is transformation and marriage. But even this positive resolution is not sufficient to undo the chain of consequences of Jack's original attempt at murder.

The giant and his grand vizier finally realize that the only way to resolve the problem is to go to the root of it, to nullify Jack's great power. Again they implicate his mother; this time she asks Jack directly to transfer his power to her. Once he has done so, the giant feels he does not even have to kill Jack. Without his power, Jack is only worth blinding and leaving to linger in starvation. Predictably, this cruel disdain, stemming from a reversal of the balance of power, also backfires.

Jack is saved first by the slave and then by his wife. She comes to him out of love and, like him, earns what she needs by an act of kindness with no thought of reward. In its blindness the ram reminds her of her husband, so it is appropriate that saving it from the well should reveal the cure for her husband's condition. She is the protagonist of this subplot or move, in Propp's terminology. We may thus see her helping the

ram as a preliminary test and her rescuing Jack as the basic test which certifies her as heroine. This earned status justifies her active role at the end of the tale. In the meantime we are returned to Jack as rejuvenated hero.

Once his sight is restored, Jack's first thought is to get back the blue scarf of strength. This might make us fear that he is going to follow the route of the fisherman's son, but we discover that he will not. Although he kills all the giants, Jack then turns the scarf over to his wife. This action has two implications. First, it would not be seemly for Jack to attack his own mother, even though he has finally become aware that she connived at his death. Her being flailed and driven away is appropriate punishment. That it is done by Jack's wife, who is a mother and has been kind to a blind ram, suggests that aggression is not per se evil. The second implication of Jack's giving the blue scarf to his wife involves trust. The last time he gave the scarf away, he also gave it to a woman he trusted, and she betrayed him. That he gives it to his wife shows that he has not lost the ability to trust and also that he is not so attached to the power of the scarf that he has to hang on to it at all costs.

The final indication that Jack's nature has been tempered rather than corrupted by his experience occurs when he gives the slave half of the kingdom. This act mirrors the slave's gift to Jack of half of his substance when both were at a low ebb. Sharing in times of either great want or great plenty is indicative of a person's basic nature. The slave could have reasoned that he had too little food to share with another. Jack could easily have forgotten the slave when his own efforts won him the giant's kingdom.

The fisherman's son promises the servant of the Gruagach that he will help her when he escapes from his confinement. But when he becomes king at the end of the story, no mention is made of her. Sean, the son of the fisherman of Kinsale, does not promise the hag's servant anything, but when he defeats the hag he leaves the servant in charge of the castle and its riches. Jack does not promise the slave anything either, but he goes further than Sean in making the slave an outright gift of half the kingdom (in fact giving the slave first choice).

Placing Jack's experience in relation to that of the two fishermen's sons provides a helpful but finally inadequate framework for appreciating the central concern of 'The Blue Scarf.' An important difference between Jack and those two heroes is the greater importance of the mother in his

experiences. In order to gain a perspective on that relation, we shall be turning presently to the views of Sigmund Freud.

Jack's relation to his mother is in some ways the most interesting one he has. It is far different from the relation in a normal wonder tale, where the mother's function is minimal, seemingly confined to giving the hero a cake with her blessing before he starts off. Despite Jack's making her life difficult with his thefts, we are not prepared for the mother's falling in love with the giant and helping him in his plots against her son. Usually such antagonism is focused on the stepmother, who herself sends the hero off on a quest she hopes will cause his death. As Bettelheim points out, such use of the stepmother is only a disguise for the child's inability to admit that his sustaining natural mother may also be a punishing one (*Uses of Enchantment* 66–70).

Disguises like these depend on the mind's ability to repress unacceptable thoughts. This ability rests not only on the fact that there are conscious as well as unconscious thoughts but also on the more specific workings of different mental functions, outlined in Freud's conception of the mind as divided into three parts. We can best appreciate another level of 'The Blue Scarf' by investigating both this conception and Freud's theory of infant sexuality.

In his well-known outline of the dynamic structure of the psyche, Freud postulates a basic animal self, the *id*, motivated by a desire for gratification of appetite. As the child develops, the *ego* emerges, a more aware centre which evolves into our sense of identity, the conscious "I" that makes choices between satisfying internal desires for pleasure and taking account of the conditions of external reality, which may make temporary gratification unwise. The third psychic force, the *superego*, is Freud's version of the conscience, that internalization of the voice of the child's parents which punishes the ego with feelings of guilt if it gives in to any prohibited id impulses.

Freud called the most prominent part of the id the *libido*, the sexual drive found in both infancy and childhood. He saw its development as typically going through three stages, the oral, the anal, and the genital. The suckling infant gains pleasure from the mother's breast and focuses its sensory gratification on the mouth. When the breast is not present, the child frequently satisfies itself with its thumb, a substitution which Freud saw as the beginning of auto-eroticism. The feelings of power which accompany this discovery are more evident in the next phase of development.

The anus is another pleasure centre which the child instinctively values. While the helpless infant must learn that it has no control over the breast and is thus dependent on its mother for nourishing milk, the older infant learns that it does have, or is expected to have, control over its own functions of elimination, particularly the full bowels. The child may show its new-found power by retaliating at the mother who withholds the breast and refusing to co-operate when she encourages it to defecate. The pleasure of releasing excrement may be superseded by the pleasure of holding it in.

The child's development into the third phase, the genital, is connected with its response both to the mother and to the father. If the mother is the object of love, the father, for a boy, will be the object of identification. The boy will desire to possess the mother sexually, partly in emulation of the father, partly in rivalry with him. The desire to supplant the person he identifies himself with causes the boy to feel ambivalence and anxiety, especially since the powerful father may resent and resist the attempt. Here Freud found the Oedipus complex, with its attendant fears of castration.

These three phases of development and the problems which accompany them can also be found quite clearly in fairy tales, as Bettelheim demonstrates in his analysis of 'Jack and the Beanstalk.' He sees this tale as beginning with the forced abandonment of the oral phase: the child, Jack, is to sell the cow because it has stopped giving milk. Bettelheim suggests that

> ... giving up oral dependency is acceptable only if the child can find security in a realistic – or, more likely, a fantastically exaggerated – belief in what his body and its organs will do for him. But a child sees in sexuality not something based on a relation between a man and a woman, but something that he can achieve all by himself. (*Uses of Enchantment* 189)

Jack shifts the focus of his attention and fantasy from the milk to the magic beans. Despised by the mother, who throws them outside, they grow into a 'phallic beanstalk' while Jack is sleeping:

> No normal boy could during the day exaggerate so fantastically the hopes which his newly discovered masculinity evokes in him. But during the night, in his dreams, it appears to him in extravagant images, such as the beanstalk on which he will climb to the gates of heaven. (189–90)

Entering the phallic phase of his development, Jack encounters the Oedipal conflict, which Bettelheim sees as embodied in the land to which Jack climbs:

> It is many a child's experience that most of the time, when Father – like the ogre in the tale – is out of the home, the child and his mother have a good time together, as do Jack and the ogre's wife ... If a child is not given the feeling that his father is happy to find him home, he will be afraid of what he fantasized while Father was away, because it didn't include Father. Since the child wants to rob Father of his most prized possessions, how natural that he should fear being destroyed in retaliation. (193)

The theft may be connected not only with the phallic phase but with the anal.

Bettelheim characterizes Jack's dissatisfaction with the bag of gold and the hen that lays golden eggs as a refusal 'to get stuck in the anal stage of development' (193). Although Bettelheim sees the golden harp which Jack wins on this final trip as a favourable sublimation (it 'symbolizes beauty, art, the higher things in life' [191]), he suggests that the confrontation which follows this theft teaches Jack 'that it will not do to rely on magic for solving life's problems' (191). In

> ... cutting down the beanstalk Jack not only frees himself from a view of the father as a destructive and devouring ogre; he also thus relinquishes his belief in the magic power of the phallus as the means for gaining him all the good things in life ... As the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' ends, Jack is ready to give up phallic and oedipal fantasies and instead try to live in reality, as much as a boy his age can do so. (192)

A more conventional, and less optimistic, Freudian interpretation of this ending might be that Jack sacrifices phallic assertiveness in order to continue living under his mother's authority.

Applying the psychoanalytic approach to the Irish tale, I would suggest that the blue scarf can be seen as the symbol of awakening sexual power, comparable to the beanstalk in the English tale. In both, the gaining and using of this power is accompanied by temporary independence from the mother. Where the ogre's wife protects the English Jack, the mother of the Irish Jack not only marries the giant after her son gains power but leagues

herself with her new husband against her son. When the giant has Jack in his power after robbing him of the scarf, he sadistically blinds rather than kills him. As Freud indicated in his interpretation of the myth of Oedipus, blinding is a common symbol for a castration threat. It thus provides another indication that the Irish tale concerns an Oedipal conflict, with the giant as father and Jack as son competing for the mother.

The English Jack was able to cut down the phallic beanstalk which had precipitated his Oedipal conflict, thus not only killing the giant but leaving himself safe with his mother. The Irish wonder tale is somewhat more sophisticated. Jack not only kills the father-figure who symbolically maimed him; he encourages the punishment of the mother who co-operated in the attempts to have her son die. If we take putting out Jack's eyes to symbolize a castration threat, we must then take killing the giant as rejection of the threatening father and punishment of the mother by Jack's wife as repudiation of the attachment to her in favour of another bond, matrimony.

The power which Jack's scarf represents is best understood in the battles with the cats and dogs and in their transformations. The scarf stands for that awakening of sexual energy which works through seeming destructiveness to a harmonious conclusion. Jack's ability to turn the animal into the human, aggression into love, is a very important gift. Its strength enables Jack not to cringe before the superior brute force of the giants; it even transfers some energy to his mate to drive out the mother figure he had loved so blindly before. The new bond with his wife is strong because their initial conflict was in the open, as opposed to the covert hostility directed at him by a seemingly loving mother. The latter could not be placated by the items she asked for: strips of hide from a threatening bull, a nail from the toe of Jack's wife, an apple from the garden of the ferocious dogs. Not the fruits of Jack's power but only the power itself would satisfy her. She gets that power and turns it over to her husband, who promptly uses it to deprive Jack of his potency.

But in the darkness and helplessness of being without that power, Jack discovers other sources of life and energy. He goes through a process both cleansing and destructive. He finds the strength of powerlessness, the rewards of humanity, kindness, and love. This discovery tempers Jack's attachment to the power of sexual energy and assures us that when he regains it, he will be more secure in his use of aggression in the successful attacks on both the giant and his mother.

We could take this story as beginning like a child's fairy tale and progressing to a more adult-oriented wonder tale. We would then see the tale starting as a kind of dream or child's fantasy built up out of alternating hopes and fears. After Jack's mother forbids him to touch the scarf, secretly, in private or in his mind he goes back to it and wraps it close around him. The energy from this transpersonal source causes an inflation of his ego which carries him into fantasies of overcoming his father. But when the ultimate act of killing the father fails, the fear of retribution replaces it. He has threatened the creature to whom his mother is inexplicably attached; he will be punished. And he is, by being sent into danger. He meets the threats and turns one into pleasure by creating a beautiful woman who becomes his wife. Yet he cannot commit himself wholeheartedly to her: he is still attached to his mother and cannot quite admit her part in the danger he has undergone.

When Jack's mother finally plays on his attachment to betray him into the giant's power, Jack sees the truth of life far more clearly than he ever did when he had eyes. He sees his mother's betrayal, but he also experiences the strength of love and kindness offered him by his wife and his slave. Their loyalty reconciles him not only to these higher qualities in himself but to the power of love to create a bond with others. He has learned what true feeling and mature values are.

At the beginning of this section, I asked what part aggression plays in a wonder tale and also what happens when the giant stops being simply an evil alien and becomes part of the domestic scene. We are now in a position to answer these questions. The giant seems to stand for the threatening force with which the hero must contend. The more it is brought into the family circle, the more it is revealed as a force requiring a response from the deepest level of the hero. In fact, the destructive giant could almost be said to be called up by the hero's experience of his growing power. The unprovoked violence which the hero unleashes on the giant is therefore rightly turned back on the hero, who is then not allowed to regain his power until he can understand clearly why and on whom it must be used. Ironically, his initial hostility towards the giant was well founded, but his efforts could not be successful until he recognized the true relation between the giant and his mother and the consequences to him. His own aggression could not be productive until he had experienced the violence of the giant.

Considering the tale in the light of Dumezil's and Reid's concern with the threat to the community posed by the warrior's necessary violence, we find another contrast between Jack and Cu Chulainn. In facing the ten savage cats and the nine ferocious dogs, Jack must exert his full battle ardour. But he is rewarded immediately in the first case by the appearance of lovely women, one of whom he marries, and in the second case by nine handsome men who marry the other women. In contrast to the pattern of Cu Chulainn's experiences, we have here as a natural consequence of destructiveness the establishment of harmony, strongly emphasized in the ten marriages. As we have seen, Jack's marriage also contains the seeds of a resolution to the larger conflict in the tale.

Invariably in the wonder tale the hero's breaking of an initial prohibition ultimately leads him to a greater gain. In this tale it involves him in a clearer human conflict than is often the case. In the next chapter we shall look more closely at this prohibition, discovering that it is often intimately involved with the theme of the tale and that it has roots in archaic mores.

6 Open Prohibitions and Hidden Needs

IN THIS CHAPTER we shall be looking at a wonder tale in which prohibitions have important and complex implications. The idea of prohibitions has deep-rooted religious associations; they work powerfully as taboos in primitive cultures and survive as 'superstitions' that industrial man scorns on the one hand and practises on the other (in such observances as touching wood after a favourable statement about the future or omitting the thirteenth floor of a high-rise building). As discussed by John Reinhard, these taboos were an important part of the mores of the Celts, governing both things done and things not done. Known as *gessa* (gyass' uh; singular *geis* [gyesh]), they continued to be important in modified form in later Irish literature.[1]

The Rees brothers point out that in the heroic sagas, 'the violation of *gessa* is ... a sure omen of approaching death' (*Celtic Heritage* 327). They also connect such violations with the paradoxical enigmas which characterize the lives of the ancient heroes. Cu Chulainn, for instance, at the end of his life finds himself in a situation where he will be violating a geis whether he accepts or rejects food he is offered by three malevolent crones. If he accepts, he will be eating the tabooed flesh of a hound; if he refuses, he will be breaking a more social prohibition against refusing an offered meal. Nobility obliges him to dishonour a taboo which is really a totem identification. (He was as a youth given his name – *Cu*, meaning 'hound' – after killing a deadly watch-dog whose place he then took.) The Reeses note that 'It is of the nature of personal *gessa* that they have a proclivity to trap their victim between themselves and the more general prohibitions of etiquette and propriety' (331) – in Cu Chulainn's case, between personal identification and warrior honour.

Proinsias MacCana suggests that gessa are a consequence of the pagan concept of 'sacral kingship,' which makes it necessary 'to insulate the person of the king against the perils of the profane world' (*Celtic Mythology* 119). Thus, as Myles Dillon points out, some gessa 'are apparently the result of a desire to avoid a set of circumstances which had once led to disaster.'[2] The king cannot be allowed to run such a risk because the well-being of the kingdom depends on him.

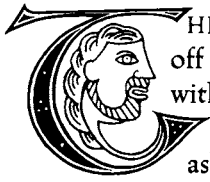
Dillon also notes that another form of geis is connected with the kind of *noblesse oblige* which is so important in the career of Cu Chulainn and other pagan heroes. 'In some cases a *geis* is imposed by one man upon another, often by means of a successful exploit, as when Cu Chulainn lays a *geis* upon the Connachtmen, binding them not to pass the ford until someone has removed the branch which he has thrust in the ground' (xv). As Dillon suggests, 'this form of *geis* is a commonplace of modern Irish folk tales, often imposed by the winner of a card game' (xv n). We shall see an example of this kind of geis when we look at the tale of 'The Cotter's Son and the Half Slim Champion' in chapter eleven. Such a geis does not necessarily have the fatal consequences attributed to the other forms mentioned above. Rather, it is a challenge to heroic action, which explains its presence in wonder tales.

The prohibition functions as a form of geis in wonder tales. As Max Lüthi suggests, 'Underlying these severe prohibitions and commands, one senses a way of thinking similar to that in the taboos of primitive peoples.'[3] But whereas to break a taboo has fatal consequences for the primitive person who believes in it, to break a wonder-tale prohibition leads to enlarged life rather than death. As Lüthi observes,

> The many tasks given to the fairy-tale hero offer him great opportunities, but the prohibitions place limits upon him and put him to the test. However, even when he oversteps these limits, he is not necessarily destroyed; rather, he may be led on roundabout ways through distress and sorrow to higher goals. (78)

This outcome is obviously in tune with the more optimistic nature of fairy tales and wonder tales. In the story we are about to consider, we shall take a close look at the nature and function of two prohibitions which are laid upon the hero.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF GREECE[4]



THE ELDEST SON of an Irish king told his father he was going off to seek his fortune. The father offered him a small cake with his blessing or a large one with his curse. The son chose the large cake. When he stopped to eat the cake, a robin asked him for some crumbs. The son refused and was immediately swallowed up by an opening in the ground. A year later the same thing happened to the second son. After another year the youngest son decided to go off. But he chose the small cake with his father's blessing, and he shared it with the robin. In return the robin urged him to spend the night with a Druid who could give him good advice.

The Druid told the king's son to watch his chance the next day, when he would see a daughter of the King of Greece and her twelve ladies-in-waiting go bathing in a nearby pond. By gathering their clothes and taking them up a tree, the king's son could force the women to promise him the little lame duck that would still be in the pond. All happened as the Druid predicted. Soon after the king's son was given the duck, it turned into a beautiful maiden, also a daughter of the King of Greece. She said that the stepsister he saw at the pond had not only enchanted her but had done so with their father's agreement. To make her his, the king's son would have to fight to break the spells on her. When he pledged himself to do so, she instructed him to become a cowherd for her father and to demand the Room of the Wind to sleep in, in lieu of wages or food. This had been the princess's room but was kept locked since she had been enchanted in it.

The king reluctantly agreed to these terms and gave his new cowherd the key to the room. There was a fire blazing inside the room and plenty to eat and drink. Unknown to the king, his daughter also spent the night there. The next morning she warned the king's son of the combat he would face that day when his cows wandered into the property of a three-headed giant. But she assured him that he could defeat the giant if he were not tricked into boasting of her beauty. Sure enough, during the fight the giant said it was no wonder the king's son was doing so well, considering the beautiful woman to whom he was betrothed. As coached by the princess, the king's son answered that the giant's mother was more beautiful. With encouragement from the robin, the king's son was able to cut off the giant's heads and take them to the King of Greece.

The king was so pleased with his new cowherd's success that he wanted to give him a banquet, but the king's son refused and went to the Room of the Wind again. There the princess cured his wounds with a healing balm. The next day the king's son fought the older brother of the first giant, again insisted on the beauty of the giant's mother, and again was exhorted to victory by the robin. Returning to the castle with the giant's heads, he was invited once more to dine with the King of Greece but went to the Room of the Wind instead and had his wounds healed by the princess.

The following day went as the first two had. Before the fourth day, the princess warned the king's son that he faced his most difficult fight yet. He must face 'the Wild Hag herself, the mother of the giants' (*Children of the Salmon* 262). She would have deadly sharp fingernails and would also try to get the king's son to boast of the beauty of the princess. This fight lasted long, and the hag was persistent in complimenting the beauty of the princess. Hard pressed, the king's son finally forgot himself and blurted out, 'Famine take you, ugly hag! She is more beautiful than you!' (263). With that the hag redoubled her attack and cut deeply with her nails.

Fortunately the robin was able to advise the king's son to kick the glass mantles the hag had around her. If he could break all seven, she would be reduced to the strength of an ordinary woman. The king's son was able to do so; then he cut off her head. Being presented with the head, the King of Greece knew he was entirely free of the foes who had plagued him, but despite his pressing, the king's son still refused a feast and went to the Room of the Wind.

Unlocking the door, he discovered a cold, cheerless room with no healing balm and no princess; then he realized that loss of her was the price of praising her beauty over the hag's ugliness. The next day the King of Greece offered help, which the king's son accepted; over time he regained his health. Then the King of Greece brought out one of his daughters and asked if his guest had ever seen a maiden more beautiful. Twice the king's son answered this question in the negative, but the third time he could not restrain himself and said he knew a woman whose little toe was more beautiful than the face of the king's daughter. The king then locked him up and proclaimed he would be beheaded unless a more beautiful woman appeared by a certain time.

On the day of execution the king's son was able to get two short postponements. At the end of the second, the sky darkened and three

crows flew around, then landed. They turned into three women; when one took off her stocking, 'light flooded out from' her foot (266). The women then became crows again and flew away, but the king reluctantly had to admit the truth of his captive's claim and let him go.

Continuing his quest for the princess, the king's son came to the house of a red-haired wizard. The wizard told the king's son that the princess had stopped with him the night before and that she and her twelve waiting-women had lamented for the king's son. The wizard then sent him on to another wizard, who was his brother. This wizard sent him on to a third brother, who informed the king's son that the princess was to be married the next day at her uncle's. The third wizard conducted the king's son to the hall but would not go in for fear of losing his head.

The king's son entered the kitchen and began playing the buffoon, stealing food off platters intended for the wedding feast and giving it to the wizard outside. The king's son refused to leave until he could see the princess. In her presence, he acted the fool some more and finally demanded a drink from her hand. Then he slipped into the glass a ring she had given him when they were in the Room of the Wind together. She recognized it and married the king's son instead of the other.

Eight days later, after the wedding feast was over, the king's son took his new bride out in a coracle. There they saw the wizard who had led him to the feast approaching in another coracle. The wizard offered to race, and the king's son accepted, but lost. He claimed, however, that it was because he had two in his coracle. The wizard suggested that his wife move into his coracle for the next race, and despite her warning the king's son agreed. The wizard soon disappeared with the princess, and the king's son realized he had been tricked.

In search of his wife he came to a king's court. Inside he found her, but she told him that the wizard would kill him if he found him there. She also told him that the wizard had two lives, one of which was in an egg in a tree near the door. That tree had to be felled with one blow of a rusty axe to free the egg. The king's son got the axe and struck the tree. As it fell, it gave a wail that the wizard heard. The king's son grabbed up the egg just as the wizard arrived. He threw it at a spot under the wizard's left breast; when it hit, both of the wizard's lives were extinguished, and he fell dead. Collecting the wizard's wealth, the couple sailed for Ireland, where they lived happily ever after.

LIKE MOST of the tales of this type (the Man on a Quest for His Lost Love[5]), this one involves an initial falling in love, followed by a long period of testing. Although the king's son makes mistakes, his persistence keeps evoking the aid of the princess until all hindrances are finally removed. These hindrances are gradually revealed to be not only external (the enchantment of the princess) but also internal (the rashness of the king's son under stress).

Each of Meletinsky's three tests undergoes an interesting transformation in this tale. In the preliminary test, the hero wins the princess, but only in the role of his helper. For the basic test she instructs him how to act so as to win her as bride. When he fails, she leaves, only to reappear as helper again when he is about to be killed. He finally wins her as bride by finding her and returning a token she had given him. In most wonder tales this would be the additional test and would effectively close the story. But this tale has a separate move in which the hero loses his bride to the wizard. His defeat of that enemy thus functions as another additional test. I will discuss the thematic necessity of this move later in the chapter.

More important for our present purposes is the fact that the basic test involves not only fighting but two kinds of rigorous prohibition. The taboo against socializing in the court of the King of Greece the hero finds it easy to obey because of the luxury of the Room of the Wind and the presence of his betrothed. The other prohibition is more difficult for him to follow. In the face of repeated verbal provocation he must refrain from making public his deep-felt commitment to his beloved. Here he fails, not once but twice, although the first failure is preceded by three successful resistances to the leading statements of the three giants. The prohibition on praising the beauty of the princess is intimately linked with the hero's success in combat. She insists that defeat will follow if he breaks it, and the plot more or less supports this contention. Upon his praising the princess to the hag, the old woman attacks him fiercely, tearing 'half the flesh off him' (*Children of the Salmon* 263). If the robin had not advised him at that point, he would have been killed.

As I have already suggested, such prohibitions seem to stem from the primitive notion of taboo. In the Cu Chulainn saga, the breaking of those taboos or gessa calls into operation the destructive fate that awaits the hero. In the case of the king's son, the result is less drastic. Although his breaking her prohibition deprives him of the woman for whom he under-

took the test, it ends neither his career nor his life. It rather leads him, in Lüthi's words, 'on roundabout ways through distress and sorrow to higher good' (*Once upon a Time* 78). In fact, the whole thrust of the hero's adventures is to upset the status quo. The breaking of the prohibition can thus be seen as part of a necessary pattern in the wonder tale, a step in the undoing of an unsatisfactory situation. In order to disrupt repressive rule and false or inadequate authority, the hero must be unruly, as the king's son continues to be.

Once cured of his wounds from the hag, the king's son meets the same test again, only this time he is faced with another princess, whose real beauty he must acknowledge. This time, too, he is asked a direct question: does he know any woman more beautiful? The third time this question is put, he again cannot restrain himself and boasts that he does. The king takes umbrage at this insult to his favoured daughter and, like the hag, determines to kill the king's son for it. In this vulnerable position the king's son had earlier been saved by advice from the robin he had fed at the beginning of the tale. This time it does not appear, but he is saved by another bird, which turns into his beloved. Earlier transformed into a lame duck, the princess now appears as a crow. Since the crow is a bird of ill omen connected with death, its appearing would be appropriate if the king's son were really going to be beheaded. In fact, the reversal of its transformation from dark associate of death to shining light of life heralds a reversal of fortune for the king's son.

At the beginning of the tale the king's son shares with the robin a small loaf which has his father's blessing. In this situation there are two implicit demands which bear an interesting relation to prohibitions. Both demands involve self-deprivation, to take only half a loaf and to share it with a lesser creature. These could be phrased as prohibitions: don't take a loaf without a blessing on it, and don't omit to share with a bird. But such a phrasing is convoluted. Really the demands are positive, thus anti-prohibitions: do take the loaf with a blessing, even if it is smaller; do share with a bird, even if you have only a little. Both are conventional in Irish wonder tales, and the second is common in international tales as well. These demands test piety and charity, two qualities often displayed by Irish wonder-tale heroes. Having these qualities, the king's son can afford to lack others, such as prudence, which he will gain through experience.

Meletinsky notes the importance of the hero's demonstrating the cardinal virtues.

It is behavior according to these rules which defines the structure of the actions of all the characters of the tale; however, it is only the hero who of necessity follows them in an ideal manner, while the false hero [the wizard in this tale] must violate them, by the same necessity. The principle of the response to any provocation, always affirmative (thus stimulating the action), defines the structure of all the actions. Each question must receive an answer, even if it is harmful to the one who answers. Each injunction, each prescription or recommendation must be executed; the provocation to fight must be accepted ... On the other hand, each interdiction must be violated, thus equally stimulating an action.[6]

Although the emphasis on stimulating action needs to be questioned, Meletinsky's focus on the hero's affirming virtue in word and deed suggests yet another way for us to understand why it is appropriate that the king's son should proclaim the beauty of his beloved. Her prohibition leads him into the trap that the Rees brothers claim is so often connected with gessa: he must either break his promise to her or tell a lie to someone else. Remembering the importance of royal truth-telling as discussed in chapter one, we can understand why breaking the interdiction will bring final success: his telling the truth is an act of virtue and integrity.

Meletinsky's point about stimulating action brings up the whole question of activity and passivity in wonder tales. It has been complained that women, even when they are the heroines of wonder tales, are usually passive. Cinderella may go to the ball, but incognito, and she then waits passively at home for the active prince to find her. Of course, the thirteenth son of the King of Erin does the same, but he becomes quite aggressive when found. From another point of view, however, it can be argued that even heroes are basically passive. Robert Scholes concludes that 'the hero is not an agent but a patient. His actions are essentially reactions.'[7] By Meletinsky's own analysis, we might say, the hero must obey the rules which specify that he can only respond to external stimuli. Since these stimuli are always present, he is always active, always doing good or violent deeds, but he is none the less never acting on his own initiative. When we look at this process closely, Scholes claims, we see 'only that strangely passive creature, the subject/hero, and the functions that shape his existence' (110). The functions he refers to are the thirty-one functions of Propp's scheme, which derive from the plot. Since Propp's whole approach is to treat characters as subordinate to plot, we

need not be surprised that his type of analysis underlines the passivity of all the characters in a wonder tale. On the other hand, Propp's approach is so helpful in uncovering important attributes of such tales that we need to test this consequence of it to see if perhaps wonder-tale heroes really do lack initiative.

Taking as our example the actions of the king's son, we should note that from the beginning he *responds*, to the choice his father offers, to the request of the robin, and to the advice of the Druid. So far, then, he has shown virtue in responding to the four outside stimuli which shape by their polar choices what his fate may be. Similarly, with the princess, her father, the giants, and the hag, the king's son responds to others' advice, offers, and provocations. The next phase of his adventure is not quite so simple. He journeys on his own initiative but receives help from the different wizards, in 'each case after being asked to give help. With the third wizard the king's son definitely takes the initiative, however, asking where the princess is and asking the wizard to go there with him. Once they arrive he tells the wizard to wait outside while he goes in to get food and drink for him. In the process he acts the fool until his request to see the princess is granted. Then, again on his own initiative, he drops the ring in her cup.

It may be argued that her having originally given him the ring is the action which causes all his subsequent reactions. Granting the validity of this overview, we must still admit that here as at some points in other wonder tales the hero clearly does show initiatve and individual will. To that extent such actions qualify the absoluteness of Scholes's suggestive analysis. On the other hand, it still seems to me fair to say that the hero of a wonder tale shows much more character than personality. This being so, we might expect that psychology would not be of much use in analysing such tales. In fact, we have seen that it is. The answer to the seeming paradox is that the simplicity of the characters merely displaces the psychological interest from the individual psyche to the relations among characters (as to the nuclear-family situation of giant, mother, and son present in 'the Blue Scarf') or to the plot and objects or figures in the tale.

We can gain an understanding of the psychological importance of mere creatures in the wonder tale by looking at the relation of the king's son to birds. After he shares his loaf with the robin, his good deed is repaid immediately by the robin's directing him to the Druid who starts him on his adventure. The first step in that adventure is to do another good deed for a bird, separating the transformed princess from her inimical stepsister.

As a reward for rescuing the lame duck, the king's son finds himself face to face with 'the most beautiful young woman on whom the sun ever shone' (*Children of the Salmon* 255). His further reward is not only to have her love him but to have her treat him as he had treated the robin and the duck when he gave food to the first and succour to the second. In the Room of the Wind after his battles, the king's son receives both of these from the princess. Although his breaking the prohibition causes him to lose this support, he is not really abandoned by the birds. As we have noted, first the robin saves him from the hag, and then the crow saves him from the King of Greece. The saviour princess whose foot emanates light is really a transfigured form of the duck with a lame foot rescued earlier by the king's son.

In underlining the functional parallel between the robin and the princess as bird, I am trying to suggest that there is a pattern of help freely given by the king's son and then freely returned to him. The prohibition which seems to disrupt his relation with the princess is really a necessary step in the development of this pattern. The pattern itself allows us to see that, if the prohibition functions superficially both as a test and a painful paradox ('deny the truth about your love to win her'), it is finally the means of the king's son discovering that good deeds carry their own reward or blessing in the face of the superior power of the world. To put it another way, success in the world depends less on physical bravery and battle strength than on knowledge (of the hag's secret) and transcendent light (which, coming from a woman's foot, is sufficient to free him from imminent death).

This theme is of course very different from the one which emerges from Cu Chulainn's life. Instead of helping birds and being helped by them, Cu Chulainn attacks them. Rather than learning from the difficulties that follow these attacks, he pursues the hero's goal of complete self-sufficiency; to gain victory he depends on his tremendous strength and agility. As I have just suggested, the king's son learns that his own prowess is insufficient to gain victory in all the circumstances he will encounter. For Cu Chulainn such an experience would be a lesson in depending on women. But the point seems clear in both tales: only those who accept that dependence can establish lasting relations with the world.

Another way of understanding the function of the princess's prohibition and the consequences of breaking it is to look at the psychology of the nuclear-family arrangement in which the princess is involved. We can begin by considering the return to her father's court as it would

appear to her. If the king's son should praise her, it would be clear he is in contact with her. Obviously she does not want to run the risk of being put back under a spell. But in addition to fear, we may speculate, she must feel anger; it would be natural for her to desire revenge. Her personality being simple, we cannot expect any direct indication of such emotions, but we can observe the structure of her relations with her father and sister and generalize on the consequences of her actions. Looking at the scene in which she finally appears in front of her father and sister, we realize that revenge is exactly what she gets.

Her father is about to offer the hand of one of his daughters to the noble hero who has rid his land of the evil forces that were plaguing it. But before he makes the offer he cleverly tries to force the prince to indicate he will accept by getting him to agree that this daughter is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. When the prince cannot refrain from denying this, the king in hurt pride demands that the more beautiful one be produced. He thus sets the stage for his own humiliation by a cast-off daughter.

Freed to continue his quest, the king's son finds the princess under circumstances which oblige him to demean himself. Although he is termed a fool, he acts more like the destructive simpleton whose strength ensures his being tolerated. Even after he comes into her presence, the princess does not recognize him until he passes her the ring she gave him earlier.[8] Since the ensuing marriage would normally conclude a wonder tale, the extra episode could be thought of as an anticlimax. I have already suggested how the final adventure can be justified as the additional test; we can also approach this episode from a psychological perspective.

In the last episode the king's son wins the princess from a male power by killing that power. I put the conflict in this way to suggest that, though he may have contributed to the humiliation of the father of the princess, he has not won her from that father. The house where she was to marry another was specifically labelled 'the house of her father's brother' (269). I would see this uncle as a stand-in for the father, another indication that the king's son has not resolved his Oedipal conflict yet. The same evidence also points to a Freudian complex shared by the King of Greece and his daughter. His offer of another daughter is an indication that he does not wish the king's son to marry his first daughter. Despite the marriage, then, I would suggest that the princess will not belong to her husband until he can defeat a father-figure; I would contend that the wizard who appears at the end functions as one.

The wizard has been an ally. At odds with the brother of the King of Greece, he has seemed to be a trustworthy helper. The King of Greece has also appeared as an ally, with his offer of food and rest, but the princess's prohibition of the king's son from partaking of them turns out to have been well founded. For when the king's son finally does partake, he is further enmeshed by the first step in an offer of marriage. And when he answers the king's leading question truthfully, the king's son finds himself with an ally turned enemy. Both former allies try to forestall his union with the princess. I would therefore conclude that, if the union is to last, it must be preceded by the elimination of such an enemy.

In refusing to follow the tempering advice of the princess, the king's son reveals himself again as the kind of hero who would rather confront and deal directly with difficulty than finesse his way through with ritual politeness. His way is more painful, but more decisive. Her co-operation in helping him eliminate her abductor shows her willingness to condone this side of his nature, as she had when he came to her as the aggressive fool.

If we return to the point of view of the princess, it is again obvious that the relation to a father-figure is the key. She is not satisfied simply to marry a hero: she must have a man who can rid her father's kingdom of evil forces with which her father cannot contend, a man who cannot refrain from praising her beauty to that father. Even after she shames the king by a public display of her own beauty which justifies the hero's rejection of her sister, she still seems not to have worked out all the anger caused by her father's rejection of her. Her further acts of revenge are visited on substitute figures. Her father's brother is humiliated by seeing the marriage he has sponsored disrupted by a fool whom his niece insists on wedding. Finally and decisively, her abduction by another father-substitute necessitates his being killed.

The reader may be wondering whose story this is: it started as though it were about the king's son, yet I have just tried to demonstrate that it really stems from the psychic problem of the princess. I believe that the tale belongs to both. It is about the making of a hero through a variation of that process of generosity, restraint, and impetuousness that we have seen before. It is also about the freeing of a princess from her family ties by a process of overt demand and prohibition and a covert need for revenge. The unacknowledged goals of the two processes cause them to mesh very well: her need for revenge on a father-figure coincides with his need to defeat such a figure in direct conflict over the woman with whom he desires union. I am postulating that he would feel insecure in possessing

her until he could physically subdue a rival, while she would feel hostility towards any male whom she desired until she could work through the need for revenge which her father's rejection has planted in her. Each helps the other towards his and her goals until a mutually satisfactory resolution is reached.

This double focus on hero and heroine in the pattern of actions and relation in the tale correlates with Meletinsky's view of the wonder tale as deriving from primitive marriage laws. Common marriage customs are that the hero may have to demean himself in working off a debt to his future father-in-law (the king's son becomes the cowherd of the King of Greece and kills the giants who ravage the land); that the bride may be 'dressed in magnificent robes, or, by contrast, in shabby clothes and animal mask to deceive the evil spirits' (the princess appears in front of her relatives as a dark bird but finally on their challenge appears in her own person with 'light flooding out from her'); or that 'even with very minor reasons for dissatisfaction the wife may return to her ... paternal kin group'[9] (because he publicly praises her beauty, the princess deserts the hero she has spent four nights with and is finally reclaimed by him at the home of her father's brother). Only the first of these customs concerns the king's son. The other two provide a rationale for actions by the princess. As we saw in 'The Blue Scarf,' one move or sub-plot in a wonder tale may well have the hero's spouse as protagonist. In this tale the princess even achieves a kind of transcendence when she gives off light while rescuing the king's son.

This is not the only scene in which the other-world powers of the princess are made manifest: she earlier transformed the Room of the Wind into a regenerative paradise for her lover. In the latter part of the tale, she gives up her transforming ability, seeming to choose productive human relations instead of the tempting power to use others as mere characters in the drama of her own disturbed needs. The Queen of Tubber Tintye had even more other-world power and was a more driven woman than the princess, but she also was able to give up much of that power, even though she chose to continue life in that other world. The gaining and relinquishing of such power either to transform self or to enchant or disenchant others is an important dimension of wonder tales. Although the characters who have such power never speak of any difficulty in giving it up, the ability to do so is in fact a frequent indication of the resolution of the conflict in these tales.

PART TWO

Introduction

UP TO NOW we have been concerned with the traditional structural and psychological dimensions that surround the testing of the wonder-tale hero. This investigation has brought out several basic approaches to these tales. In the second half of the book, we shall be going more deeply into a variety of topics, such as animism, archetypes, and the nature of our response to the tales. Where earlier I presented animal transformations as a problem in the hero's development, the next chapter will consider the philosophical implications of metamorphosis. Changing shape can be seen as one instance of the opportunity wonder tales offer us to leave behind the constraints of physical existence and to experience in imagination what is realistically impossible. The Rees brothers suggest a way of approaching this movement of the hero out of everyday experience. I would like to use their concern with crossing boundaries as a means of reviewing tales already considered and previewing tales and approaches that lie ahead.

The wonder-tale hero always moves from this world into the other, from the natural to the supernatural. The crossing of the boundary between the two is an important act. As the Rees brothers put it, 'boundaries between territories, like boundaries between years and between seasons, are lines along which the supernatural intrudes through the surface of existence' (*Celtic Heritage* 94). Any combat fought at a boundary such as a stream 'partakes in some measure of the nature of a divination rite, as do contests engaged in at the boundaries of seasons' (94). Water was an important boundary in both the ancient Celtic tales and in the medieval romances. As John Reinhard concludes, entry to the other world was 'made by one of three ways: over water, through water, or through the *sídh* or earth mound' (*Survival of Geis* 220; see also 233).

In each of the wonder tales so far considered there are several examples of the importance of crossing the boundary between land and water. The King of Erin swims across water to get to the Queen of the Lonesome Island. The fisherman's son is bound to the Gruagach at the sea-shore; accompanying his father there, he goes with the Gruagach on the sea. The other fisherman's son, Sean, is bound to the hag by his father at sea. Jack finds his bride after crossing the sea to the island of cats. The king's son first meets the daughter of the King of Greece as a lame duck on a pond.

More important, in each of these tales the decisive combat or exchange takes place at the boundary between land and water. The son of the King of Erin is pushed by the false queen out of a window into the sea. The fisherman's son can escape from the bonds of the Gruagach only when fed water; he then turns into an eel and gets to the sea, where he first fights the Gruagach. Sean gets free of the hag by the sea and is left on the shore when she takes away his bride; the final scene takes place in the hag's palace under the sea. The basic test of Sean Ruadh takes place at the sea-shore, where he defeats the serpent and thus rescues the princess. Jack's final triumph begins when his eyesight is restored after he is plunged in the water of a well.

Mircea Eliade points out the dual function of water in such episodes. By dissolving and 'breaking up all forms, doing away with the past, water possesses' the 'power of purifying, of regenerating, of giving new birth.'[1] This analysis is obviously relevant to the immersion in the sea of the son of the King of Erin, as it is in the assimilation to the supernatural of the Indian lad who finally becomes identified with his frog skin in the sea. As Mary Douglas points out, Eliade shows how darkness can function in the same symbolic manner. She goes a step further and suggests that mere 'dirt shows itself as' yet another 'apt symbol of creative formlessness.'[2] By 'dirt' she means those things which a culture conventionally (not hygienically) considers unclean. To discover how contact with what is polluted can regenerate, we must look at Douglas's case in more detail.

Aware of the cultural limitations of Freud's attempt to universalize the taboos on incest and excrement, Douglas makes the case that taboos are placed on those substances considered polluted because they do not fit the order imposed by a particular culture. Since no mental order fits reality perfectly, there are always 'pressures on boundaries and margins' (4). More importantly, any primitive culture will contain areas where the actual

violation of such boundaries is sanctioned. The trickster stories of the North American Indians served this function. In violent contact with his own genitals and anus (as we shall see in chapter eight), Trickster not only violates cultural taboos but enacts a myth of pre-societal man trying to function in an undifferentiated universe.

Culture orders, labels, and segregates man's experiences, tabooing certain acts (incest), substances (excrement), or creatures (often animals) which might upset that order.[3] Mankind's continuing attachment to disorder and to the violation of boundaries is shown not only by pleasure in hearing tales about tricksters but also in primitive rituals which demonstrate an awareness of the powers of the disordered state. Douglas suggests that men also seem to have a 'common urge to make a unity of all their experience and to overcome distinctions and separations in acts of at-one-ment.' Useful as the taboo is for ordering life, 'the dramatic combination of opposites' is finally more satisfying (169).

My contention is that the wonder tale also contains this dramatic confrontation with the taboo and the reinvigorated unity which follows it. In chapters eight, nine, and eleven, I shall be investigating how myth and wonder tale handle excrement, incest, and impotence. In each of the next five chapters I shall be demonstrating how the tales achieve unity by first moving into the forbidden and integrating opposites. In chapter ten, for instance, we shall follow a hero in quest of a deadly princess whom he must abduct. She lives in an other-world castle with 365 windows, a good symbol of wholeness, though not a place for at-one-ment. How the opposites are combined in a this-world castle is what the tale finally brings into focus.

In their discussions of boundaries, the Rees brothers note that 'thresholds have a similar significance' (*Celtic Heritage* 94). When the son of the King of Erin is pushed out of a window into the sea, he crosses a threshold of the castle in a dramatic way. Even more dramatic is his father's earlier crossing of the threshold of the castle of the Queen of the Lonesome Island. The 'low door' has 'a broad threshold all covered with sharp-edged razors, and a low lintel of long-pointed needles' (*Myths and Folk Tales* 49–50). His bravery is tested by this obstacle in more ways than might at first be evident.

In a discussion of initiations, Mircea Eliade notes the frequency of the motif of descent into darkness, often explicitly identified as a monster or as Mother Earth. One of the barriers to entry is often a pair of clashing

rocks or gates or doors, generically labelled the Symplegades by Coomarswamy and the *vagina dentata* by Freud. Psychoanalytically, the vagina dentata is a male fantasy which connects fear of castration with sexual violation of the mother. Since the King of Erin mates with the Queen of the Lonesome Island after entering her castle through that deadly threshold, a Freudian interpretation has an obvious relevance. The connection between sex and aggression, violence and love is in fact one I shall continue to develop in the chapters ahead.

In contrast to Freud's approach, Coomarswamy's is, according to Eliade, rather 'a metaphysical exegisis of the symbolism of the Symplegades.'[4] 'Whoever would transfer from this to the Otherworld, or return, must do so through the undimensional and timeless 'internal' that divides related but contrary forces, between which, if one is to pass at all,' one must pass 'instantly' (65). These 'guardians of the threshold' can be equated with 'the monsters and griffins that guard a treasure hidden at the bottom of the sea, or a miraculous fountain from which flows the Water of Youth' (66). We met such water coming from the well of the Queen of Tubber Tintye. We also saw the prince who went there having to brave similar guardians. Fortunately for him, 'the monsters of sea and land – great whales,' bears, and so on, were all asleep (*Myths and Folktales* 58).

Looked at more closely, these exploits of the son of the King of Erin can be seen as identical with his father's. The son also must spring through an opening (in his case a window) before landing safely in the castle of the queen. He also impregnates that queen. In both cases the sexual union in the other world precedes a more permanent union in this. The overcoming of taboos results in a final wholeness which finds its appropriate form in a double marriage, with one pair reigning in this world and one pair going back to the other world.

In his comprehensive study *Shamanism*, Eliade reviews from another point of view the symbolism of the dangerous threshold and its connection with the 'paradoxical passage,' so called because the hero is asked to venture to some impossible place, such as 'where day and night meet.'[5] The ability to overcome these conditions is of course a trait of the hero. To achieve success, however, he must somehow 'transcend opposites ... abolish the polarity typical of the human condition' (486). This way of putting a point already noted suggests a parallel between the hero who resolves a paradoxical situation through action and a guesser who resolves the paradox of a riddle with the correct answer.

Although mainly a verbal pastime or game in the twentieth century, the riddle was in primitive cultures an important if not sacred form of communication and testing. He who guesses a riddle could be said to 'transcend the opposites' by understanding words which at first seem to be literal (though mysterious) but are in fact figurative. He thus 'abolishes the polarity' of his relation with the riddler by moving from ignorant outsider to knowing insider, at one with his opponent. Andre Jolles insisted in his chapter on the riddle in *Einfache Formen* that riddling once functioned, and still does, as a form of initiation.[6] In primitive societies, the wise man who asks the riddle does not need the answer. He already knows it. His aim is rather to represent the elders, those who know, and to protect their ranks from those who lack wisdom. The guesser is a novice who wants to prove his right to join the adepts. To do so he has to open the gates of knowledge, to force access to a closed area. For both aims the riddle is an appropriate form. In Jolles's view the riddle can be taken as a watchword that will lead the worthy to consecration through initiation.

In chapters nine and twelve, I shall be demonstrating how this interesting view of the riddle is quite relevant to the wonder tale. As I shall indicate, Johann Huizinga has provided documentation of the sacred origin of the riddle in *Homo Ludens*, and Max Lüthi has demonstrated its intimate connection both with the development and the structure of the wonder tale. At the moment, however, I would like to use one of Mary Douglas's conclusions about the relation of contamination to at-one-ement to suggest a broader connection of the wonder tale with humanity's difficulties in understanding the puzzle of life.

In rituals which force novices to touch or eat a tabooed substance or creature, the effect is to force them 'to turn around and confront the categories on which their whole surrounding culture has been built up and to recognize them for the fictive, man-made, arbitrary creations that they are' (*Purity and Danger* 169–70). In a culture which distinguishes among animals of certain kinds (as air-borne, earth-borne, sea-borne), an animal that seems to fit in several categories at once will be tabooed. But the initiates, 'immune to dangers that would kill uninitiated men, approach, hold, kill and eat the animal which in its own existence combines all the elements' that the culture normally keeps rigorously separated (170). By confronting 'ambiguity in an extreme and concentrated form' in a rite, 'they recognize something of the fortuitous and conventional nature of the categories in whose mould they [normally] have their

experience' (170). Yet what they learn in an esoteric initiation is what can be experienced in some exoteric tales of most cultures: the violation of taboos is evident in such narratives, whether they are primitive trickster tales of North America or oral wonder tales of Europe. In chapter eight we shall not only use the insights of Carl Jung to connect the two but shall note how compatible his theory is with that of Mary Douglas.

Discussing the modern theory of art as 'defamiliarization,' Robert Scholes traces its roots in English Romanticism. He quotes Shelley's claim for poetry, which I should also like to apply to the wonder tale: 'It purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration' (*Structuralism* 174). First formulated by Coleridge, later adapted for narrative fiction by Conrad, this grand truism can be taken as an important justification of literature.

As I shall emphasize in chapters to follow, the wonder tale at its best also celebrates 'the wonder of our being.' In chapter seven we shall discover just how naïve a view of the universe these tales rest upon: a pristine view, which leaves behind many of our learned discriminations, substituting for them a holistic perception which may be termed, with equal accuracy, childlike, primitive, or mystical.

Yet the wonder tale is optimistic in no superficial way. It not only rescues our vision from the limitations of our cultural stereotypes; it also offers both its primitive and its present-day listeners an opportunity to be in touch with the dangers of the universe. As Shelley phrased it, the 'secret alchemy' of poetry 'turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life' (*A Defence of Poetry*.) Far from trying to gain a limited harmony based on the denial of pain and death, the wonder tale includes such difficulties, moving through them to its alchemic transmutations, its inclusive resolution of the riddle of life.

7 The Animistic Mind

TRANSFORMATION is always connected with the acquisition of power in wonder tales. Even in 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin,' the one tale we have looked at in which no transformation occurs, there is an infusion of other-worldly power into this world each time Sean disguises himself in the giants' armour. The majority of wonder tales have either a hero who can transform himself or a mate or helper who needs disenchantment back to human form. As we saw in chapter three, the hero who can transform himself is faced by a grave temptation which imperils his human identity. The majority of tales are based on the common-sense convention that disenchantment is to be desired. But there is an obvious fascination in the transformed condition, as well as in the release from the spell that caused it. We need now to inquire into that attraction and its relation to the nature of the wonder tale.

In this chapter, therefore, we are going to look at a structural theory of transformation, developed by Tzvetan Todorov, that has both literary and psychological dimensions.[1] Todorov uses a number of stories written mainly in the nineteenth century to develop his definition of the fantastic as opposed to such allied genres as the marvellous and the uncanny. The marvellous involves literature which simply presents supernatural occurrences without trying to explain them. The uncanny Todorov defines as using what seems to be the supernatural, then finally providing a natural explanation of it (41–2). He is primarily concerned with the fantastic, which he defines as suspending itself between a rational and an irrational position.

We may apply many of Todorov's conclusions to the wonder tale without accepting this rather idiosyncratic definition of the fantastic. Although he would put wonder tales in the category of the marvellous, in

one sense this category is simply a more committed version of the fantastic; thus, many of his conclusions about the latter are also true of the wonder tale.[2]

After a brief study of an *Arabian Nights* wonder tale, for instance, Todorov abstracts two important themes connected with the supernatural, metamorphosis and what he calls pan-determinism. The latter term expresses Todorov's observation that occurrences in a wonder tale are so determined, or so filled with meaning, that the supernatural is made the cause where nature cannot be. This underpinning to the wonder tale obviously connects it with the primitive world-view.

The determinism of the pagan outlook has been noted by Anne Ross. 'The whole of Celtic religion was controlled by magic and affected by the correct or incorrect performance of ritual.' The gods could be helpers or hinderers: 'They frequently entered the world of men and played tricks upon those they chanced upon. They were not invincible.' In sum, 'the lives of the pagan Celts – and, to a certain extent, of their Christian successors – were hemmed in and imbued with superstitious feelings and petty ritual observances' (*Everyday Life* 173). As indicated in the last chapter, the modern reader enters a similar world in the wonder tale but has the advantage of not being bound by its primitive fear of constant supernatural incursions.

Todorov draws a number of conclusions from the importance of determinism in fantasy tales. 'On the most abstract level, pan-determinism signifies that the limit between the physical and the mental, between matter and spirit, between word and thing, ceases to be impervious' (*The Fantastic* 113). He then uses this observation to connect his two themes. 'One might say that the common denominator of the two themes, metamorphosis and pan-determinism, is the collapse (which is also to say the illumination) of the limit between matter and mind' (114). He also points out that 'the limit between subject and object' is effaced in the fantastic (116), as we shall presently see it to be in the wonder tale.

Todorov's last elaboration of the consequences of using the supernatural is obvious but important: 'The physical world and the spiritual world interpenetrate; their fundamental categories are modified as a result. The time and space of the supernatural world ... are not the time and space of everyday life' (118). The wonder tales we have already looked at provide ample evidence for this assertion.

Summing up all these themes, Todorov points out how they characterize the infant's view of reality as phrased by an authoritative structuralist,

the child psychologist Jean Piaget. '"Four fundamental processes characterize this intellectual revolution effected during the first two years of existence: these are the constructions of the categories of the object and of space, of causality and of time"' (120). Later Todorov tries to work out why the infant's world should correspond so closely to that of the literary fantastic. He points out that Piaget correlates the construction of these categories of space, time, object, and causality with the exposure to and gradual mastery of language.

> One of Piaget's contributions is to have shown that the transformation from primary mental organization to maturity functions precisely because of language, even when this is not immediately apparent. Thus, for example, in the case of time: 'The child becomes, by language, capable of reconstructing his past actions in the form of narrative and of anticipating his future actions by verbal representation.' We recall that time was not, in the earliest period of our childhood, the line joining these three points (past, present, and future), but rather an eternal present – obviously very different from the present we know, which is a verbal category – something elastic or infinite. (145)

From this opposition between the verbal and pre-verbal views of reality emerges a paradox: literature is 'constituted of words' but signifies 'more than words,' is 'at once verbal and transverbal' (156).[3] But fantasy goes further; it uses words to recreate a vision of the world before it was divided up by words.

In wonder tales there are many evidences of this undivided world. The usual beginning of the fairy tales of our childhood provides the first indication. 'Once upon a time' is an idiom which is meaningless if taken literally. How can anything be *upon* or *on* a time? In two poems about his childhood, Dylan Thomas uses the phrase 'Once below a time.' The notion of a small child being *below* time is apt and fits Piaget's notion that we grow up into time through verbal training. But the fairy-tale beginning conveys the same thing in another way. Once the reader becomes aware that it is a formula, it introduces an experience out of time. The fact that the tale is told in the conventional past tense accords with the notion of its recapturing something once possessed.

But the most obvious indication of the dispelling of time is the way heroes in wonder tales are able magically to overcome it. The hero who often begins as a child will within days be slaying an army and marrying a princess. Or, as in one popular tale, the king who was old will become

young after being given the water of life. The abolition of time is also connected with the hero's triumph over space, since the two can be said to come together in the use of such items as seven-league boots, the magic carpet, and the wishing ring. The hero can move from one place to another in 'no time at all.' He can even travel beyond the end of the world with the aid of an eagle or the wind.

Cause and effect in the wonder tale, rather than being impersonal forces, as we think of them, are also very much influenced by supernatural interference. Dead men are brought to life; wishes come true with no physical agent; and mothers sleep through the conception, gestation, and birth of babies who grow well into childhood with no help from any creature.

The lack of distinction between subject and object is somewhat more difficult to illustrate from wonder tales. I would say that it is present in the transformation of the hero or heroine into an animal or bird. I would also see it in the tale of the giant with the external heart or soul that the hero must destroy in order to kill him. It could be argued that this inability to distinguish is present in the tale-type called the Twins or Blood Brothers (type 303; see Appendix A). In a standard version of this tale a magic fish is fed to a woman, a mare, and a bitch. All three have twin offspring at the same time, and the human twins grow up to be heroes. One goes off on an adventure, leaving some token of his good health behind. When the other sees from the token that his brother is in trouble, he goes to find him. He comes to the castle where his brother has married a princess and, being mistaken for the brother, has to go to bed with her. He does not violate his brother's marriage bed but goes off to find him. With the help of his horse and dog, he forces a witch to disenchant the brother. The connection between the animals and heroes and between the heroes themselves, in the health token and in the mistaken identity, all seem to me to indicate the kind of confusion of subject and object that can be found in wonder tales.

All these abolitions – of time, space, causality, and human separation – add up to a certain kind of world. The nature of that world is well put by Max Lüthi: 'The fairy tale portrays, in a wider sense than is generally realized, a harmonious world. The confidence from which it flows is transmitted to both those who tell it and those who hear it' (*Once upon a Time* 57). The harmonious, confident aspect of that world bears quite a resemblance to the world an infant experiences before and after it is born. The wonder tale recreates this ambiance as a sense-envelope in which other kinds of testing can go on. And the use of such an envelope is

not limited to children – we all 'regress' each night when we go to sleep. Bettelheim cites Piaget on the animism of children's thinking; and as we know from our dreams, part of the mind never gives up animistic thinking. Animals that talk, or natural elements and mere objects with a will of their own, do not appear only in wonder tales.

It is certainly to this level of the mind that wonder tales speak. They use words to flatter the developing mind that it is mature enough to follow them, but words lead it to a world where impossible desires are satisfied; wonder tales lull conscious rationality by presenting clear and simple images, but in the service of a vision saturated with meaning. In the Freudian view this means that that part of the ego which is concerned with the reality principle must be reassured before the pleasure principle can combine with whatever inner pressure there is to move towards a solution of internal problems. This solution will occur in an environment which offers sublimated conflict and passion clothed in a reassuring world of words.

Another way of understanding the reader's response to a wonder tale is to use Jung's opposition of the deep self to the conscious ego. Strength of ego is important to life as it has evolved. But 'the personality as a total phenomenon does not coincide with the ego, that is, with the conscious personality, but forms an entity that has to be distinguished from the ego.'[4] Jung defines the self as 'the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known ... The *ego* is, by definition, subordinate to the *self* and is related to it like a part to the whole' (4). Since the self can merely be glimpsed by consciousness (in the evanescence of a dream, for instance), it can be denied, in the short run. But in the long run it will reassert itself. Jung's point would be that just as dreams try to restore the balance between ego and self in sleep, so fairy tales can function that way during waking hours. His essay on fairy tales shows them to be concerned with a search for integration of neglected aspects of the psyche.

Allied with the sublimating tendency of wonder tales is their impersonality. At times this trait seems perhaps inhumane, as when at the end of a tale a false queen is killed. But in fact this impersonality is usually a virtue, especially at the spiritual level where the tales so often operate. At this level they convey the sense that life is a process which, despite its pain and conflict, offers the individual an opportunity to fulfil himself or herself by harmonizing the disparate parts of the self, by not fretting after ego-needs, by giving over to the process not as victim but as the confident being who knows that good will come out of difficulty.

Impersonality in wonder tales implicitly counsels lack of attachment to both the pleasures and the pains of everyday experience. Thus, what seems at first to be the stripped-down world of the wonder tale finally reveals itself as a world in which each detail counts for something not because it appeals to our appetites but because it forms part of a pattern which offers bright meaning in a grey world. The fact that this meaning may be basically simple is consonant with the other facets of the wonder tale and in harmony with the fact that Western literature and religion are both based on a few simple truths.

The mind loves complexity, seeks it in fact, as a compensation for lack of contact with heart and spirit. The wonder tale provides an opportunity to right that imbalance by using one of the mind's own tools, impersonality, to help undercut the piling up of detail which so easily distracts from value. This is not to say that there is no complexity in a wonder tale; we have found quite subtle and complicated patterns and relations. But it is to say that by cutting down on detail and not offering a basis for the usual attachment to the emotional involvements of the characters, the wonder tale does invite the reader to respond in a clear-headed, simple, and direct manner.

Todorov points out an important consequence for the reader who moves with a work of fantasy: '*the transition from mind to matter has become possible*' (*The Fantastic* 114, his italics). As he indicates, this is most obviously true where the tale includes metamorphosis, as wonder tales usually do. Having given his sympathy to a male protagonist, the reader may find himself vicariously able to change into a bear or a bull. Or having given her sympathy to a female protagonist, the reader may find herself invited to be inexplicably charmed by a bird which shortly becomes a young prince.[5] We are about to turn to a wonder tale in which the latter transformation occurs, along with several others. We shall be looking into the implications of such metamorphoses and the circumstances surrounding them.

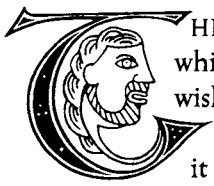
Some preliminary observations might be helpful. Bettelheim suggests that the child's need to see the parent as nurturing (good) causes the child to split off a transformation of the parent who scolds or punishes (is bad) into a witch or a wolf. The tales may also contain adult projections. In some tales the parents' wish for offspring is so strong that they will even accept an undesirable animal, reptile, or demon. Bettelheim sees such a distorted parental wish as indicating an emotional imbalance which is

projected on to the child, turning it into a difficult creature. Taking 'Hans, My Hedgehog' from the Grimm collection as an example of such a tale, Bettelheim comments, 'the children of angry parents often behave like hedgehogs or porcupines: they seem all spines, so the image of the child that is part hedgehog is most appropriate' (70).

In Irish wonder tales it is not common for the hero to be born an animal and to win human form at the end. Such involuntary transformations are normally reserved for subordinate characters. It is common for the hero to win or be given the ability to achieve animal form voluntarily, and we considered in chapters two and three the difficulties this involves him in. In the remainder of this chapter we shall therefore focus on involuntary transformations. These make up a whole section of fifty types in the Aarne-Thompson tale-type list (see Appendix A). The general title is 'Supernatural or Enchanted Husband (Wife) or Other Relatives.' The most well-known tale is the husband who is a creature by day and a man at night. In European tales as in the Irish ones, whether the enchanted one is a lover or a relative, the protagonist is usually the untransformed one. The exceptions are most often those cases, like 'Hans, My Hedgehog,' where the story begins with the parents and then shifts to their animal offspring.

In the tale we are about to consider, the focus is on the woman, and it is her lover who is under an enchantment. The main part of the tale concerns an approach to the other world and finally a successful penetration of it. The relation between transformation and the other world becomes quite evident not only in the enchanted condition of the hero but in that of other characters as well. The story thus allows a detailed look at the dynamics by which 'the transition from mind to matter' is accomplished.

SGIATHAN DEARG AND THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF THE WESTERN WORLD



THE KING'S DAUGHTER, Noinin (No' neen), saw a bird while out walking one day. She thought it so beautiful she wished to have it. Though the bird would not let itself be caught, it returned the next day. This time she did catch it and carried it to her chamber, where she put the bird in a large cage. That night it turned into a man.

'I am under the enchantment of the Queen of Gleann Dearg (Glan Dyar' rug),' said he. 'Every day I am a bird, but in the night I am in my own form, I become a man again. I am cramped here and suffering; free me from the cage, even for a short time; free me till daybreak.' (*Irish Folk Tales* 104)

The princess freed him and they spent the night together, but when he became a bird again in the morning, he would not re-enter the cage. In fact, when the chamber door was opened, he flew out. Although Noinin could not catch him, she followed him all day over hill and dale.

She was walking and he flying, sometimes near her, sometimes far away, till late in the day he came to a hill. Near the top of the hill she strove hard to seize him, but the hill opened and he disappeared in the opening. When she made an offer to follow and go down, the place closed before her, and there she was, left on the hillside. (104–5)

Lost, she came the next day to a castle, where a woman offered to take her in service for a year. The woman said it was the Wind's home, and she was the Wind's Queen.

After nine months Noinin gave birth to a boy. When the year was up, the Wind's Queen suggested kindly but firmly that Noinin move on, since she did not wish to have a boy growing up there.

'Well, now as you are going,' said Wind's Queen, 'here is a ring. When you look through it you will feel neither hunger nor thirst, and, besides, you will see all things around, whether distant or near, exposed or concealed.' (105–6)

Having walked through the day, Noinin tried out the ring and saw a castle ahead. She went to it and was taken in service for another year by the Moon's Queen. At the end of a year Noinin was told by this queen, again kindly but firmly, that she should move on, especially as her son was growing so large. The queen gave her a cap that would take her to the place she wanted to go and a rod that would open any closed passage or give back the proper form to an enchanted person. With the queen's blessing, Noinin travelled through 'waste land and wild places' (107) but towards evening was able to use the ring to spy another castle.

Here she took service with the Sun's Queen. At the end of a year the son had grown into a young man, so this queen also suggested that Noinin move on. She foretold more hardship but good fortune at the end. Holding Noinin for an extra day, she gave her a tablecloth that would always provide food and drink and asked her to look out for the queen's sister, who had been taken away years before.

On this extra day, Noinin's son had an adventure with three ravens he had often observed quarrelling.

The boy went to the birds on the hill. 'It's a shame for two to be killing one,' said he.

'It would be fitter for you to mind yourself than to come here interfering with us,' answered one of the ravens.

'Whatever I do I'll stop this,' said the boy. 'There will be only one against one from this out, let the third be on me.'

Noinin's son made at one of the ravens; the bird flew around and above and was rushing to strike when the boy pointed his sword out before him and stabbed; the bird's blood gushed out on his hand, and when he shook it off it struck one of the other two ravens. That moment the bird was the finest man at all. (108)

Then the boy sprinkled blood on the other raven, which was also transformed. The two men led Noinin and her son off down the road until they came to a cliff. It opened to let the men through but closed before Noinin and her son could enter. But Noinin remembered the rod given her by the Moon's Queen. With it she struck the cliff three times, and a passage opened into 'the world below' (108).

She and her son joined the two men again, and as they walked through this beautiful country, Noinin remembered the magic cap. Putting it on, she wished the way open to Gleann Dearg. The road was opened to them, but as they neared their goal, they could not see well; 'all was ... covered with dust, fog, and blinding enchantment' (109). Hungry, Noinin spread the magic tablecloth.

All were eating and drinking with pleasure when a swan came down, took the best bit of food on the cloth, and flew away with it. It was not long till she snapped off another piece.

'If you take a third one I'll try a rod on you,' said the boy.

The swan came the third time and was sweeping down, when he took the rod which his mother had and struck the swan with it. That minute she dropped to the ground, a beautiful woman, the sister of the Sun's Queen. (109)

Knowing well this land, the sister advised Noinin's son to accompany her to the King of Gleann Dearg. There she was taken on as maid to the king's daughter. The princess and her maid went for a walk, and the maid asked why the kingdom was so dark with fog. The princess told her that it was an enchantment of her mother's. She showed her maid an old castle with a large ring on its door which, when pulled, would disperse the dark

fog. The sister met Noinin's son that evening and took him to the castle. He gave the ring three pulls, and on the third one the air was cleared, on the fourth the enchantment broken.

The sister then asked him to pull the ring on the other side of the door. A voice asked what he wanted; the son requested that the queen and her daughter be deprived of their powers of enchantment and that Sgiathan Dearg (Skee' a hawn Dyar' rug) stand before him. Both wishes were granted; a bird appeared; and when the son struck it with the rod, it was turned into a man. The three then went to Noinin, who was reconciled with Sgiathan Dearg after he explained that his enchantment had forced him to return to Gleann Dearg. They decided to go back to 'the Upper World' (111), but her son had in the meantime fallen in love with the princess. He remained behind to marry her and take over the kingdom.

Noinin, Sgiathan Dearg, the sister of the Sun's Queen, and the two men who had been ravens retraced their steps to the Sun's house. Noinin carried the door ring with which her son had summoned the magic voice. She now summoned it in order to convince the Sun's Queen that the woman accompanying her was indeed the queen's long-lost sister. The Queen of Gleann Dearg had changed the Sun into 'a block in the corner' (111). The Sun's Queen asked that her husband be freed; Noinin gave her the ring and told her to ask the voice for this boon. She did, and her husband was restored to her.

That night they all celebrated, and the next morning they raised the dead raven to life and transformed him back into a man. The three men then revealed that they were brothers of Sgiathan Dearg, also enchanted by the Queen of Gleann Dearg. They accompanied Noinin and their brother back 'home to the Western World' (112).

THIS TALE contains so many obvious examples of the Piaget-Todorov pre-lingual thought-process that they hardly need emphasizing. There is straightforward wish-fulfilment with the large ring, the annulment of space when Noinin looks through the small ring, the effacement of subject and object in the personification of Wind, Moon, and Sun, and the violation of natural causality in characters walking through cliffs or being transformed. There are in fact six separate metamorphoses in this tale, though three of them count as one (the ravens). The passive hero, Sgiathan Dearg, is simply a bird; his brothers are ravens; the Sun's sister-in-law is a swan, and the Sun himself a block (whether of wood or stone we are not told).

One of the virtues of the tale is the way its details support the connection between plot structure and metamorphosis. The nature of the attraction between Noinin and Sgiathan Dearg is made evident in her treatment of the bird when she first catches him. She 'kissed him, fondled him, put him in her bosom, and carried him home to her chamber' (104). We are not surprised to hear that she bears a son nine months later. The image of the man in the cage is compelling. The fact that as man he does not try further escape takes on a new meaning when he does escape as bird from the larger cage of the chamber after its door is opened the next morning. He has left the prison of Gleann Dearg for temporary freedom in the upper world but must exchange that freedom voluntarily for another cage in order to win ultimate freedom.

Though we sympathize with the bird's natural desire for freedom, only later do we discover the compulsion that Sgiathan Dearg was under. His urge to get out of the chamber was caused by the queen's spell, which allowed him only three nights in the upper world. This limitation is a frequent condition of such transformation, as is the enchanted one's being a human by night and a creature by day. The strict laws of the queen's enchantment provide only the smallest leeway for individual action, but exactly enough for him to achieve his goal once he has found the right person. That person, the daughter of a king, is persistent and patient and has a sensuous and passionate nature. It is the product of a night of passion that will redeem the suffering of the two parents.

Noinin's following her lover to the hill and being shut out make a poignant situation. She has to undertake the long and lonely journey of the abandoned woman, as is standard in this type of tale. The use of the houses of Wind, Moon, and Sun is also common, but some of the details accompanying those stages are exceptional and accent some implications of the pattern. For instance, the birth of the son at Wind's house and Noinin's being asked to leave because of him reinforce the poignancy of her position. His birth and growth also underline, in a way not typical of wonder tales, the passage of time and the fact that the son is the tangible reason for her being on a quest. In so far as she serves each woman well, she deserves the gift each gives, but her being in service at all represents a forgetting or putting off of that quest. As usual, each gift finally plays a part in achieving the goal of the quest.

Unlike his mother's patient service, the son's part is more active and dramatic. His sense of fair play prompts him to take the life of a creature,

an act which leads directly to the freeing of two others. This is the first active breaking of an enchantment in the tale and obviously bodes well for the son's future. His second successful attempt also is accompanied by aggressive feelings. He strikes the swan because he is angry at it for stealing his food. Since he warns the swan, we may infer that this bird also wishes to be transformed and probably has been consciously provoking him. The fact that it takes this approach indicates that it has understood the son's nature.

The son lifts his third enchantment when he uses the rod to strike the bird that becomes his father. The prelude to this act is important: the son is under the direct guidance of the woman he had previously freed. She has him lift the door ring three times. But this act is not as wilful and spontaneous as his actions have usually been; he only repeats what the woman has already done. More important is his lifting the next ring, calling the voice, and demanding his father. These independent actions are followed by his most important achievement, the cancelling of the power of the Queen of Gleann Dearg and her daughter. These feats announce the son as worthy of a more-than-human destiny, as is demonstrated by his marrying the princess and staying in the lower world. Like the marriage in 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island,' this one is balanced by the return of his mother and father to the upper world.

Shifting our attention back to the mother, we can derive further meaning from her quest. In contrast to the Queen of Tubber Tintye, who spent her pregnancy and the first six years of her child's life blissfully unaware of the natural process going on within her, Noinin is forced to give up an harmoniously continuous present for adult cares. For her three years of service, however, Noinin earns various magic objects. Each of these gives her some power to transform space and time, and cause and effect; thus, each should bring her a little closer to the lower world – first the ring, then the tablecloth, and finally the rod, which opens the way to the lower world and the cap which will lead her to her husband.[6]

Noinin has gone through a number of stages and a long process, earning by her perseverance enough magical power to gain entry to the lower world in her own form and on her own initiative. Even though the two brothers approach the cliff in human form, it simply opens for them as one earlier had for their brother in bird form. Perhaps the queen welcomes their return with the hope of re-enchanting them; certainly we

may expect that she does not want Noinin to enter. Long and difficult though Noinin's way has been, its rewards are proportionate. Only her method can free the inhabitants of that world from the spells which bind enchanters and enchanted alike in a darkened kingdom. As the original protagonist and a king's daughter Noinin obviously has a right to the ring which she brings out with her.

The balance thus established seems secure: as a woman, Noinin should have the power of the ring as part of her conscious life. The further implication is that her husband (from the lower or unconscious world) will be the subordinate one in the union, just as he has been throughout the tale. They are returning to her father's kingdom, where, we can assume, she will ultimately become the ruler.

We cannot, however, leave the tale with this neat balance between conscious-female, unconscious-male powers. We must note that the process which Noinin has undergone has resulted in the liberation of predominately male energies. First the three male ravens are transformed. Then the female swan is transformed, as a necessary step to unlocking the powers of the lower world. The sister of the Sun's wife performs an essential function. As a female she gains the confidence of the princess (whose status and title in the lower world are the same as Noinin's in the upper). Without that confidence, the transformation of Sgiathan Dearg would be much more difficult (though it would involve a confrontation with the Queen of Gleann Dearg – that battle with the binding power of the other world which is usually necessary for a free balance to be re-established). The princess and Noinin are also alike in being enablers. The princess has the sister of the Sun's wife try out the ring to find what it will do. Similarly, Noinin herself undertakes no acts of disenchantment. Her son does most of those, but when she might command the transformation of the block into the Sun, she gives that power to the Sun's wife. This lack of a need to control bodes well for the future relation of both wives to their husbands, especially so in the case of the princess of the lower world, whose mother is a sinister enchantress.

The liberation of the Sun is an anomaly in the world of the tale.[7] His initial transformation might well have been connected with the queen's darkening of her lower-world kingdom. Certainly his title and his wife's help make his house the most important of the three in which Noinin stays. I would see his transformation (into an inanimate block) as symbolic of the queen's power. To bind the sun as spirit or person is to control the

source of warmth and growth. That this is the queen's intent is shown by her placing her own kingdom in darkness.

The point of the liberation of bound males in this tale thus becomes the necessity of undercutting female power in order for women (ultimately) to be free and life to continue. Sgiathan Dearg's escape and fathering of Noinin's child assume even more importance in this light. But his action in the upper world is balanced by the female swan's action in the lower. His seemingly selfish desertion of Noinin is paralleled to the swan's seemingly selfish stealing of food. Both have the long-range aim not only of freeing themselves from transformation but of re-establishing balance in the whole system, male and female, upper and lower, light and dark, life and death. The transformation of the Sun stands as an indicator of this more profound meaning of the successful quest.

In the light of Piaget's focus on developmental categories for structuring the adult world, the relation between the upper and lower worlds in this tale is instructive. Noinin, who begins in simple passion, implicitly unable to distinguish herself from her lover, is rudely thrown into the world of time and space by the action of enchantment on her husband. He is returned to the magic world, which exists always in the present, but she must labour through time and space, through cause and the gestation of effect. Her unwillingness to use the transforming rod except to approach her husband tells us something of her movement from the pleasure principle to the reality principle, from the child's to the adult world-view. She returns to the upper world, where life is conducted without enchantment.

In contrast, the son obviously enjoys the use of implements of magic. Although he does not undergo metamorphosis himself, he is attracted to those who do and to those who know the secret of controlling matter with mind, abolishing with a will time and space, cause and effect. He is at home in a pan-determined world.

We are also at home there; much of our enjoyment of a wonder tale is knowing that each character, event, and object that is described will play a part in its plot and theme. Each of the gifts of the three queens to Noinin is necessary to the success of her quest. Her son is necessary to her husband's liberation and to her final reunion with him. The sister of the Sun's wife is necessary to the clearing of darkness from the lower world and to the complementary restitution of the Sun, as well as to the sum-

moning of Sgiathan Dearg. This coherence, leading to integration and unity, pleases that part of the mind that instinctively looks for pattern and meaning.

Part of this pleasure derives from the patterned way the characters cross boundaries in the tale. These boundaries are not only between this world and the other but within each world as well. At the beginning the doors of the bird cage and bed chamber function as thresholds. The cage, which is appropriate for a bird, is inappropriate for a man. The chamber, which the man is happy to share with the princess, is inappropriate for the bird. Sgiathan Dearg serves his own ends in crossing the boundary into this world and in spending the night with Noinin; reverting to bird form he must follow a supernatural compulsion to cross back to the other world. In this tale the boundaries between this world and the other are not the sea or a river but are still natural, a hill and a cliff that open for those who are called. As always, such a boundary can be forced by those with sufficient power.

Similarly, a rod or sword can transform the bound state of an enchanted person. Seeing metamorphosis as the crossing of a boundary will allow us to bring together Todorov's concept of 'the transition from mind to matter' with the Rees brothers' concept of intrusion 'through the surface of existence' into another world. The movement of Noinin towards a reunion with the father of her child is not only a journey towards and then through the boundary between two worlds but also a matter of progressive disenchantment of transformed creatures. After the son forces the two brothers to give up their bird state, they are compelled towards the other world. Following them puts Noinin in the position finally to enter that world herself. Once there, the son again compels a bird to cross the boundary back to human form. As before, this act makes possible their real goal, the freeing of Sgiathan Dearg. He not only regains his human shape but is able to cross for good the boundary of the other world into this one.

Because of its narrative patterns, this literary form pleases and compels belief in the unquestioning reader. Outside the literature such reliance on patterns can carry a coercive power, as in the overdetermined world created by a dominating religion. As an example of a culture where such a religion flourished in different forms over a number of centuries, ancient Egypt would seem a good place to look for narratives involving Piaget's

timeless world in which subject and object are hardly distinguished and causality works according to association and wish-fulfillment. Ancient Egypt was also a place where writing developed early; we shall therefore be able to look at a tale of undisputed antiquity, which will allow us to turn again in the next chapter to the question of the age of wonder tales.

8 Taboo and Integration

IN THE LAST CHAPTER we saw what structuralism can demonstrate about the correlation between the undifferentiated world presented in wonder tales and the pre-verbal world of the child. In this chapter I shall be offering two ways of approaching the question of the antiquity of folk tales. First we will look at plot motifs that the folklorist can trace back three centuries in written form, although they obviously have a much older oral history. Second we will consider character types that analytical psychology certifies as psychically primitive whether occurring in modern fantasies or archaic folk tales.

Among the earliest written sources of the material from which wonder tales were formed is a story recorded on an Egyptian papyrus perhaps as early as the sixteenth century BC. This tale contains typical animistic motifs found in the oral tradition: the primitive belief in the separable soul and the magical motif of the Obstacle Flight. In this motif a series of small objects, such as a comb, are transformed into a series of large natural barriers, such as a forest. The tale also contains two other motifs which will provide an opportunity for me to bring out the complexity of the interrelations between myth and folk tale.

THE TWO BROTHERS

'ONCE UPON A TIME there were two brothers,' Anubis and Bata (*Literature of Ancient Egypt* 93). The younger, Bata, worked for the older, tending his cattle, plowing and reaping his fields. Bata lived in the stable, while Anubis and his wife lived in the house. One day when they were planting a field, Anubis sent his brother in to get seed. Bata approached

his brother's wife, asking her to open the granary. But she told him to go do it himself, since she did not wish to interrupt her hair-dressing. He did, but on his way back she stopped him, told him how virile she found him, and invited him to her bed. Offended, Bata refused, letting her know that he considered his brother a father and her as a mother. He told her not to repeat the suggestion, that he would tell no one.

When Anubis returned to his wife that night, she told him that Bata had asked to sleep with her but that she had refused, pointing out to Bata that she was like a mother and Anubis like a father to him. Then Bata had assaulted her, she claimed. Angry, Anubis stood behind the barn door, determined to drive his spear through Bata when his brother brought in the cattle. But the lead cow warned Bata what would happen, and he ran away. Anubis pursued him.

After a while, Bata stopped running and prayed to the god Pre-Harakhti to protect him by putting crocodile-infested water between him and Anubis. His prayer was granted; then Bata asked his brother why he wanted to kill him. Hearing the wife's story, Bata swore by Pre-Harakhti that it was untrue. Then he 'cut off his phallus, and threw it in the water,' where it was swallowed by a fish (99). Anubis was grieved, weeping for his brother but still unable to get to him. Bata told him he could not return but would go to the Valley of the Pines and put his heart in a pine tree there. If ever anything happened to Bata, Anubis would know because his beer would produce froth. He should then come look for his brother's heart and put it in a bowl of cool water to bring Bata back to life. Anubis went home and killed his wife.

In the Valley of the Pines, Bata built himself a house and prospered. One day the Ennead ('the company of the major gods' 100) came to Bata; feeling sorry for him, one of them fashioned 'a house-companion who was more beautiful in her body than any woman in the entire land' (100–1). Then the seven Hathors ('the goddesses who determine an individual's fate' 101) proclaimed that she would die 'by an execution knife' (101).

Bata coveted his partner and warned her not to go outside lest the sea carry her away. He confessed his two most intimate secrets to her: 'I am a female like you and my heart lies on top of the flower of the pine tree' (101). Once when Bata was hunting, his virgin wife did go outside; the sea surged up behind her. Although she got back in the house safely, a braid of her hair caught in the pine tree and was carried by the sea to the

place where Pharaoh's clothes were washed. Pharaoh noticed the scent in his clothes and sent a retainer to discover the source. Seeing the braid of hair in the water, the retainer took it to Pharaoh. Enamoured of the braid's owner, Pharaoh called in his wise men, who were able to tell him who she was and where she lived.

Pharaoh sent an envoy to the Valley of the Pines, but Bata killed all except one. After he returned, Pharaoh sent soldiers and a woman who presented Bata's wife with gifts and persuaded her to go to Pharaoh. The king made her his 'Chief Lady' (103), and she told him how to kill Bata. Pharaoh then sent soldiers to the valley, and they cut down the pine 'flower upon which was Bata's heart, and he fell dead at the very same moment' (103).

The next day, the beer Anubis was about to drink produced froth. He went to the Valley of the Pines and found his brother lying dead in his house there. He began to search for Bata's heart. At the beginning of his fourth year of searching he had almost given up hope when he found a pine cone. He took it to the house and put it in cold water. When the heart had absorbed the water, Bata came back to life. Anubis had him drink the water so the heart could return to its proper place inside him. Then Bata asked his brother to go with him to Pharaoh, promising that Anubis would be rewarded for giving to the Pharaoh a bull which would really be Bata transformed.

It happened as Bata promised. One day the bull went to where the queen was and told her that he was really her husband, Bata. When the bull left, she quickly went to the king and asked to be fed the liver of the bull. Although vexed by this request, Pharaoh agreed and sacrificed the bull the next day. But as the carcass was carried out, two drops of blood fell, one on each side of 'the great portal of Pharaoh' (105). They grew into two large trees which were honoured by Pharaoh, as the bull had been.

One day the queen sat under one of the trees, which told her it was Bata whom she had twice caused to be killed. Again she went to Pharaoh, this time asking that the two trees be cut down and made into furniture, and again Pharaoh agreed. While the queen watched the trees being cut down, a splinter flew into her mouth; she swallowed it and became pregnant. She bore Pharaoh a son, who became the king's heir. When Pharaoh died and the son became king, he held court and denounced the old

queen for her misdeeds. She was dispatched by the knife, as the seven Hathors had foretold.[1]

THIS ANCIENT TALE contains at least eleven of the motifs identified by Stith Thompson as common in later wonder tales. Of these we shall look at three, the life-token, repeated reincarnation, and 'love through sight of hair of unknown woman' (*Folktale* 276). The hair motif will lead us to the wonder tale we shall be considering in the next chapter; the first two provide a basis for discussing the antiquity and malleability of such motifs.

The life-token motif is usually found in the tale-type that most closely resembles the relations between the two brothers. We have already traced the pattern of this international tale, the Blood Brothers (303), in the last chapter. It concerns twin brothers, one of whom leaves to seek his fortune, telling the other to watch a tree or a liquid which will indicate his death if it should ever happen. One day the remaining brother does notice the fatal sign and goes in search of his twin. He comes to a kingdom where he is mistaken for his twin by the latter's wife. He does not violate the marriage bed but follows the brother's trail and forces the witch who has killed him to bring him back to life.

Although Bata and Anubis are not twins, the connection between them is strong, as the life-token motif indicates. Like one of the twins, Bata does not commit adultery when he might. Like the other twin, he is brought back to life by his brother. The differences between the Egyptian tale and the international type are important enough to have convinced one scholar that there was no direct connection.[2] This conclusion indicates not that they originated independently but that each probably derived from an earlier source elsewhere. The Egyptian story is a folk-tale version of what had been a myth. Anubis was an early Egyptian god of the dead whose animal form was a jackal. Bata was another early deity, a pastoral god whose animal form was often a bull.[3]

Bata's transformation in 'The Two Brothers' brings us to the second motif I would like to investigate. In wonder tales, as in this tale, the motif of repeated incarnation is often associated with a being's need to finish a life or a task from which it has been cut off. This need is satisfied in many versions of 'Cinderella,' including one dating from ninth-century AD China.[4] In the Grimm version, Cinderella plants on her mother's grave a twig that grows into a tree from which a bird throws her the finery she

wears to the prince's ball. As Iona and Peter Opie point out, often in this tale-type, 'a friendly animal or a bird ... is the creature who succors the orphan; and it becomes clear that this creature is the spirit or reincarnation of her mother' (*Classic Fairy Tales* 12). Furthermore, as Thompson notes, 'in some versions the helpful animal is killed, and a tree springs up which magically provides beautiful clothes for the girl' (*Folktale* 127). This sequence is very much like that undergone by Bata: after he is killed as a bull, he appears as a tree. In the Egyptian version the motif is justice and punishment, whereas in those involving a mother, it is love and help for her offspring.

'The Two Brothers' is nevertheless a variant of what Anna B. Rooth has termed 'the Cinderella Cycle.' Since the European Cinderella is a later variant, it is not surprising that they have common elements. For instance, there is also justice and punishment in 'Cinderella': it is a just reward that the ash-dwelling heroine should be raised because the slipper really does fit her, and it is just punishment that her two sisters mutilate their feet to force them into the slippers but do not gain the prince by their attempted deception. This aspect of the theme of 'Cinderella' is closer to 'The Two Brothers' than a first reading might suggest. Just as the heroine of the fairy tale lives in the ashes while the other family members have a higher status, so Bata lives in the stable with the beasts while his brother and sister-in-law live in the house. Bata's having to flee after an attempted seduction by the woman he thinks of as mother is paralleled, in one of two European variants to the Cinderella tale, by the heroine's having to flee her own father, who wants to marry her.[5]

As Bettelheim points out, this variant puts Cinderella in an ambivalent position (*Uses of Enchantment* 245–6). According to Freudian theory she would desire her father in fantasy, but the prospect of fulfilling that desire would fill her with guilt at taking her mother's place. Fleeing her father is a way of convincing herself she is good, but becoming the lowly ash-girl indicates an underlying feeling of guilt. In contrast, Bata is the lowly cowherd first and invited to share the bed of his 'mother' second. But afterwards he too acts like one who protests so much that we may infer guilt feelings. Why else would he cut off his penis? Ostensibly, it might be to prove his disdain for such a carnal member, but while this gesture brings tears to the brother's eyes, it appears a shocking excess to us. The only circumstance under which it would conceivably be appropriate would

be if Bata actually were guilty of adultery. He would then be offering atonement and proof that the deed would never be repeated. But since we know that Bata was not guilty in fact, the alternative seems to be that he feels guilty. While possible, such a feeling hardly seems a sufficient motivation for his drastic action.

Bettelheim's analysis of 'Cinderella' offers another underlying motive:

> Behind the surface humility of Cinderella lies the conviction of her superiority to mother and sisters, as if she would think: 'You can make me do all the dirty work, and I pretend that I am dirty, but within me I know that you treat me this way because you are jealous of me because I am so much better than you.' This conviction is supported by the story's ending, which assures every 'Cinderella' that eventually she will be discovered by her prince. (241)

Bata's abasement can be shown to rest on the same feeling of superiority. Speaking to his brother after dismembering himself, Bata shows a knowledge of what will happen to him in the future. He tells him why he will need to be revived: in order to 'avenge the wrong done to me' (*Literature of Ancient Egypt* 99). This wrong cannot be the wife's attempted seduction, since the brother revenges that immediately; it will be the deed of whoever tries to kill him in the Valley of the Pines. Bata knows beforehand that the pine tree will be cut down on purpose. In other words, he is revealed as superhuman even before he is befriended by the Ennead, who indeed call him 'Bata, Bull of the Ennead' (100), long before he becomes Pharaoh's honoured bull. A horrifying denial of humanity, self-mutilation can also be seen as a step towards godhead in freeing the individual from carnal concerns. Like the boy who became a frog in the North American Indian tale, Bata leaves behind human ties in his archetypal transformation.

Cinderella's answer to the possibility was also to flee and debase herself, but only in preparation for a satisfying relation to a desirable member of the opposite sex. Bata's abasement makes such a relation impossible, causing adultery, death, and revenge to dominate his life on earth. The Irish wonder tale which we shall now consider briefly contains a resolution that combines the endings of 'The Two Brothers' and 'Cinderella': there is both a happy marriage and a dealing out of punishment in the form of death to a wicked woman. There is also a double transformation very similar to Bata's changes of form.

THE SPECKLED BULL

NCE THERE WERE two sisters, one of whom married a prince. The other one was jealous and did away with the infants that her sister bore her husband. Finally she even managed to change her sister into a green stone and marry the prince herself. But one of the infants, a boy, was found alive by a fisherman, who brought it up. The sister heard of it, however, and convinced the fisherman that he had a changeling, which she should take away. She cut its throat and buried the body.

In a few nights, 'a tall tree grew up from the child's grave'; it was loaded with all kinds of fruit (*Folktales of Ireland* 120). A speckled cow ate some of the fruit and gave birth to a male speckled calf, even though there was no bull in the prince's herd. Because of this strange happening, the new queen feared the bull. She pretended to be sick and asked her husband to feed her its heart and liver to cure her. When the prince sent his men to kill it, the bull escaped.

It went to the field of a king in the Eastern world, where the king's daughter recognized it as a transformed man. The bull told her how to help him gain his human form, and when this was done he went back to the kingdom where the evil queen lived. He told what had happened, and the queen was condemned to death. Having already married the king's daughter, he returned to become king of the Eastern world.

I HAVE LEFT out some details in this Irish tale in order to keep the focus on the parallels with the ancient Egyptian one. These parallels are numerous, although those concerned with the initial situation are somewhat distorted. The Irish *ménage à trois* consists of two women and one man. The villain is still a woman, however. The victim is first her sister and then the sister's son. When the son becomes the focus, the parallels become much clearer. As in the Egyptian tale, there is a guilty wife who feels compelled to do away with the creature that is a reminder of her crime. The parallel is especially close when wives in both tales work on their husbands to feed them the liver of the bull. In the Egyptian tale, the wife then persuades Pharaoh to cut down the two trees, whereas in the Irish tale the tree grows up first and the cow becomes pregnant from eating its fruit. But this magical pregnancy parallels the wife's swallowing the splinter in the Egyptian tale. In both cases it is the offspring of that

magical pregnancy who finally expose the guilty wife and bring about her punishment.

I am not suggesting that the Egyptian tale is the original of the Irish one. It might be argued that a common belief in fate, reincarnation, and vendetta could cause two separate cultures to generate similar sequences independently. I would not contest such an hypothesis, but I would suggest that it can be combined with the theory of geographical and historical diffusion of oral tales. Many primitive cultures of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East seem to have shared the three beliefs mentioned above. In fact Rooth indicates that the version of the tale in which a cow is slain probably did originate in the Middle East (*Cinderella Cycle* 57). In any case, sharing the three beliefs, both Europe and Asia would find it easy to adopt a tale-type with those premises, altering its details to fit particular taboos. (In India another animal appears in place of the sacred cow.)

Whether the core of the tale began as a ritual or myth or just a story is something we cannot determine, since we cannot know what went on in the five hundred thousand years that culture and language probably existed before the first written records, from approximately 3500 BC. All we can know is that the sacred and the profane mingle very readily. The fact that Anubis and Bata are early Egyptian gods does not mean that their tale is merely a degenerated myth. Parts of an existing profane narrative were probably attached to the already sacred figures, or all the motifs may have had a profane origin and some have become sacred when attached to Anubis or Bata.

Bata's sacrifice of his phallus, for instance, would seem to be very mythic (with obvious ritual overtones). We know that Isis had a great deal of trouble finding the phallus of Osiris after he was dismembered. And we know that their worship was connected with the Nile's yearly flooding of its delta croplands. Such vegetative fertility myths were common not only in the Mediterranean but in many parts of the ancient world.

In North American Indian myth, for instance, there is an archaic trickster figure, one of whose adventures is based on the same animistic connection of individual potency and the fertility of nature. Paul Radin, who has made a study of Indian trickster cycles, concludes that their hero is 'the oldest of all figures in American Indian mythology, probably in all mythologies.'[6] His reasons for this conclusion have a bearing on our discussion.

The trickster is a very poor representative of the sacred tradition. He is crude, immoral, lascivious, a figure of appetite – quite the opposite of Bata. Trickster loses his penis by sending its huge length into a tree to punish a creature that was making fun of it. Unknown to Trickster, the creature is a chipmunk that is busily gnawing up the penis as it is stuffed in. When Trickster finally kicks down the hollow tree, he discovers chewed-up lengths of the penis lying inside. He begins throwing them away, naming them as he does: 'This the people will call potatoes; this the people will call turnips; this the people will call artichokes; this the people will call ground-beans;' and so on (39). Although we have the elements of a vegetative fertility myth here, the tone of the trickster stories is far from solemn. He is constantly overreaching himself, tricking others and hurting himself in a series of crudely humorous and grotesque adventures appropriate to a Freudian id figure.

Radin sees these episodes as embodying 'vague memories of an archaic and primordial past, where there as yet existed no clear-cut differentiation between the divine and the non-divine. For this period Trickster is the symbol' (168). Radin suggests that a later, more decorous stage of culture may attempt to refine and dignify such a figure. Thus we come back to my point: it will not do to assign primacy on the basis of divisions between sacred and profane, dignified and rowdy, myth and folk tale. Either category moves too easily into its supposed opposite.

The lack of 'clear-cut differentiation' noted by Radin can be connected with the question of boundaries as explicated by Mary Douglas. Civilization obtains order by using boundaries to separate different substances and actions. Trickster is so uncivilized that he cannot distinguish these elementary lines. Unsure where the boundary between himself and others is located, Trickster treats his organs as other and thus causes laughable pain to himself. Freud would say that those who listen to the exploits of Trickster laugh off the energy which has built up over the taboo and which, undischarged, could undermine the conscious order that keeps each member of the audience from acting out his repressed desires.

Even where Trickster is conscious of boundaries, he violates them knowingly to gratify his id desires. To avoid starving during one bad winter, he joins a well-off tribe by passing himself off as a woman. Although he actually bears children to the chief's son whom he marries, Trickster finally gives away his maleness and runs off, leaving a tribe filled

with shame. As Radin reports (139), this episode violates so many taboos that the narrator both gave it an untypically abrupt ending and suppressed a term of family relation which would have made more glaring the breaking of the most serious of taboos. The narrative breaking of boundaries went beyond the tolerance of the narrator to give it proper form. Yet, as Douglas argues, such violation of taboo is essential to the vitality of the tribe.

If the trickster is approached as a potential of the hyman psyche rather than as a representative of an early stage in the evolution of myth or society, the meaning of his archaic qualities takes on an added dimension. In a commentary on Radin's study, C.G. Jung indicates the relevance of this figure to the Western tradition. Focusing on the various travesties of religious observances that were practised (and even tolerated by the church) during medieval times, Jung points out how the children's bishop, the fool's pope, and the ass festival contained grotesque disguises, animal actions, and verbal indecency – in short, 'many abominations and shameful deeds,' as a twelfth-century ecclesiastical report objected.[7] Jung contends that these trickster-like figures and activities are best understood as compensations for the excessive piety of the time.

Jung's psychology resembles Freud's in seeing conscious repression as building up an unconscious supply of energy which has to find some outlet. But to the idea of repression Jung added the importance of certain functions beyond the sex drive which need expression. He believed the trickster to be 'an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity. In his clearest manifestations he is a faithful copy of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level' (200). This primitive, undifferentiated part of the psyche is an aspect of Jung's collective unconscious, which lies below the level of the personal unconscious. As we saw in chapter three, he believed that this deep level of the psyche expressed itself in primordial images and dramas, in both subhuman and superhuman figures. Since, Jung claimed, the collective unconscious generates such archetypes spontaneously, he was not surprised when the dreams of a contemporary person with no background in mythology matched the little-known archaic myth of some primitive tribe.

Most prominent of these archetypes are certain figures representing unconscious impulses which need conscious recognition and integration. As one of these the trickster was given the name of *shadow* by Jung; it

represents the denied side of the individual which gathers force in the unconscious because it is not allowed conscious expression. The other most important archetypcal figures for a man are the *anima* and the *wise old man*. While the shadow will be of the same sex as the individual, the anima represents the female component of the man, that side of his biology and psychology which has been involuntarily unexpressed but which also needs to be acknowledged if he is to attain wholeness. The anima may be attached to the mother who nurtures a male, the woman who enchants him, or the witch who threatens him. The wise old man represents an instinctive wisdom that tries to enlarge ego-consciousness with some notion of a larger self available to the individual. Like the anima, this figure may appear benign or malign, fatherly or demonic.

The best way to see the relation of these archetypal figures to the ego is to look at a wonder tale in which their presence is particularly evident. I have chosen an Irish variant of the international tale-type known as the Monster's Bride.

THE KING OF GREECE'S DAUGHTER

A WIDOW with three sons was so poor that she had to send her sons out in the world to find their fortunes. Coming upon a corpse in a coffin beside an open grave, Fionan, the youngest, insisted on burying it. His brothers, preparing their evening meal, refused to help. During the night Fionan returned to the grave to discover a giant standing by the again-unburied coffin. The giant refused to allow the corpse to be buried until he was paid the shilling the man had owed him. Fionan gave the giant one of his last three shillings and buried the coffin deeper than before. Returning still later to the site, Fionan found the coffin again unburied and another giant with two heads demanding a shilling the man owed him. Fionan gave him his second shilling and buried the coffin a third time, even deeper. The third time he returned it was a three-headed giant who demanded a shilling. After paying him and burying the coffin deeper yet, Fionan was able to sleep through the remainder of the night.

The next day the two brothers taunted Fionan as a fool for his expenditure of money and effort. Where the road forked three ways, each went off alone to find his fortune. At lunchtime Fionan was joined by a poor man with a black beard with whom he shared his bit of bread. The man said,

'My name is Crohoore. It was my corpse that you ... buried' last night (*Well* 118). As payment for Fionan's good deed, Crohoore asked to be allowed to be his servant. When Fionan agreed, Crohoore took him to the castle of the first giant. Warning the giant that the King of Ireland was bringing a hundred thousand troops to take him prisoner, Crohoore suggested that he hide while his 'friends' tried to placate the king. The giant went into a cave; Fionan and Crohoore ate the dinner he had set out. They then loaded all the giant's treasure on his livestock and herded them across the drawbridge. Hearing the noise, the giant called to know what it meant. Crohoore told him it was the king and his troops. He then informed the giant that the king demanded the Cloak of Darkness before he would leave. After the giant told him where to find it, Crohoore took it and then led Fionan away from the castle.

The next night they came to the castle of the two-headed giant, and Crohoore played the same trick on him, this time getting the Shoes of Swiftness in addition to the giant's treasure. The third night they came to the castle of the three-headed giant, on whom Crohoore played the trick again, this time getting the Sword of Sharpness. Travelling on with their beasts and treasure, the two came to a castle with twelve spikes in front of it, eleven with heads impaled on them. Crohoore told Fionan that this was the castle of the King of Greece, whose 'beautiful daughter was held under spells by the King of Darkness' (130). This king had granted 'twelve chances to the twelve greatest champions of the world to release her' (130). The heads on the spikes belonged to the first eleven champions, all of whom had failed. Reluctantly Fionan agreed to be the twelfth champion.

Going to the castle, Fionan impressed the King of Greece with his treasure and won the king's permission to try to rescue his daughter. The king explained to Fionan that he must follow the princess when the spell drew her out that night, observe what happened, and give a full account to the king the next day. Put in her bed chamber, Fionan observed as the princess at midnight said, 'Walls and panels, open ye, open ye, and let me pass through' (132). Putting on the Cloak of Darkness and the Shoes of Swiftness, Fionan said the same words and followed her. Overtaking her at the edge of a wide river, he heard her say, 'A boat, a boat for me, and off to the King of Darkness's castle' (132). When she was carried off on it, Fionan said the same words and was able to follow her.

Hidden by the Cloak of Darkness, Fionan saw how the King of Darkness feasted the princess, slipped the diamond ring off her finger, and said,

'That's another pledge that binds my darling princess to me' (133). The king then put it on a tray full of such rings that was guarded by fifty armoured men. The next day Fionan reported all this to the King of Greece and was given instructions for his second task – to bring back all the pledges that the princess had left with the King of Darkness. That night Fionan again followed the princess. When the King of Darkness escorted her back to her boat at the end of the night, Fionan remained behind, beheaded the fifty guards, and returned with the tray filled with diamond rings.

The King of Greece was very pleased to find that Fionan had been successful a second time but warned him that the third task was by far the most difficult – to bring him the head of the King of Darkness. That night the King of Darkness told the princess she would finally belong to him the following day because no weapon could harm him. Under her questioning he admitted that there was actually one such weapon; it belonged to the Giant of Three Heads and was called the Sword of Sharpness. Fionan was, of course, relieved to hear this news. When the King of Darkness escorted the princess to the water's edge at the end of the night, Fionan cut off his head with the Sword of Sharpness, tucked it under his Cloak of Darkness, and took it to the King of Greece. If he was glad to see it, his daughter was overjoyed, for in cutting it off Fionan had broken the spell which bound her to the King of Darkness.

Fionan and the princess were married and set off for Ireland with all his treasure. Crohoore bade him farewell and disappeared. Fionan returned to the crossroads where he had agreed to meet his brothers. They had no luck. He took them home and gave them part of the treasure he had brought. Then he built a castle in which he and his bride lived happily with his mother.

A GERMAN VARIANT of this tale has been analysed by Marie-Louise von Franz in her Jungian *Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales* (chapter 7). She offers a convincing analysis of the helper as shadow, the princess as anima, and the two kings as two sides of the wise old man. The helper is known as the Grateful Dead Man to students of folklore (see *Folktale* 50–2). Although the shadow usually appears as an antagonist, in this case, according to von Franz, he simply 'represents an unlived part of the life within the hero, potential qualities that have not yet entered his character and his actions' (*Psychology of Fairy Tales* 102). The hero's giving time,

effort, and money for the burial of the corpse is a good sign because it means he 'has concern for the shadow and devotes energy to it' (102). Because the hero is 'an ordinary lad' and 'the shadow figure has a compensatory function,' the helper brings self-confidence and power into the hero's life (103). It does not need to take on the extreme animalism and grossness that the trickster might bring to a more sophisticated hero concerned with purity.

This helper first leads the hero through a preliminary test to gain the three objects necessary for success in the basic test provided by the king and his daughter. In Jungian terms, the shadow mediates between conscious and unconscious forces. 'The not-yet human impulses of the unconscious often appear ... as giants who represent the uprush of instinctive power. Despite their might, they are easily fooled, and therefore there needs to be wisdom to give direction to this energy' (109). Wisdom appears through the more differentiated form of the wise old man, who 'represents the concentration of mental power and purposeful reflection' (110). As embodied in the king in this tale, the wise old man tells the hero in a concerned manner what he must do to win the princess.

But, as von Franz suggests, the wise old man has both positive and negative aspects. In this tale the negative is embodied in the King of Darkness, whose title indicates his parallelism with the King of Greece. The 'chthonic and underworldly' quality of the destructive king indicates a powerful force with which the hero must contend since it 'represents a secret, meaningful plan or intention governing' the princess (109). On one level the King of Darkness must be destroyed, but on another level bringing his head into this world means the transformation of the negative force of the other-world wise old man into the positive realm of this world. Similarly, according to von Franz, the dark king's 'lust for blood is the craving or impulse of the unconscious contents to break into consciousness' (116). Clearly, in an archetypal interpretation, violence should not be taken at face value.

The princess, 'like the unconscious, is of a piece with nature and therefore undiscriminating ... unconfined, turbulent, and elementally powerful' (109). As anima she 'poses a moral problem, although she herself is amoral. She can be counted on to set the most confused and intricate problems, but she is released when the hero lives up to his name' (108). In the German tale that von Franz discusses, the princess challenges the hero by asking him riddles. In 'The King of Greece's Daughter' the

challenges to the hero lack the verbal form of a riddle, though each test is one in effect:

> The riddles of the anima mean that she does not understand herself and is not yet in her right place within the total psychic system. Moreover, she cannot solve this problem by herself but needs the help of consciousness. On the other hand, the hero is in the same fix because he too has not yet found his place and he too does not know himself. Thus the riddle is something between both of them, something they have to solve together. It is the riddle of right relationship. (108)

In the Irish tale I shall take up in chapter nine, both the riddles and the theme of right relation are overt and important.

According to von Franz, in accomplishing his third task the hero not only gets the head but 'integrates its knowledge and its wisdom. With it in his possession he breaks the spell which had been cast on the princess' (116). At this point the shadow-helper fades out, having played his part in the integration of the hero. Fionan then returns with his bride to build his own castle, in which he will live with his mother and his wife. The brothers who refused the call to adventure are appropriately rewarded in a mundane way with gold from the first stage of the hero's adventure.

Earlier in this chapter we saw that Mary Douglas's concern with boundaries (summarized in the introduction to part two) was relevant to the analysis of Trickster. Her approach may also be applied to the Monster's Bride to provide a nice complement to the Jungian theory. The importance of thresholds is well illustrated by the symmetrical boundary-crossings at the beginning, middle, and end of 'The King of Greece's Daughter': Fionan's first three aborted attempts to bury the corpse, Crohoore's sending the three giants down into the cave, and Fionan's own three sorties into the Kingdom of Darkness.

Fionan's best efforts at the beginning of the tale cannot put the corpse deep enough to separate the dead from the quick until he has laboriously honoured and cancelled all the living obligations of the man who died. In Douglas's terms, the dead are 'dirt' (*Purity and Danger* 161) to be placed well below the surface-level of the living. Despite the piety of Fionan's act, he can be seen as acting from the feverish need of his culture to distance a taboo object. But his willingness to donate his time and effort and his last shillings to this conventional obligation brings him a paradoxical reward:

the boundary that he insisted on enforcing is broken for his own good by the very object of his honour. The Grateful Dead Man represents a benign form of what Douglas calls 'those attacking forces which threaten to destroy good order' but which really 'represent the powers inhering in the cosmos' and making for 'a unity of all experience' (161). Her postulating a higher integration of energy suggests why her theory will be consonant with Jung's.

Crohoore functions as both a destroyer and a preserver of order. First, as just suggested, he upsets the orderly working of a culture which defends its integrity by taboos and limitations, such as separating the dead from the living. Second, and at the centre of the dramatic action of the tale, he preserves the integrity of that culture by neutralizing the supernatural forces which threaten it, the giants who have usurped its land and treasure and the King of Darkness who has laid claim to its source of life – the princess who should pair with a culture-hero and ensure the continuance of the conventional order. The key action in Douglas's scheme is the encounter with the taboo object: the novice is able with impunity to 'approach, hold, kill and eat' (170) the creature which represents the elements that his culture normally keeps separate. Since Douglas is referring to a ritual while I am dealing with a tale, I shall have to transmute her terms to make them applicable.

Crohoore is the creature, and his crossing back over the border that should separate the dead from the living is the violation of the taboo. Fionan approaches and holds him, that is, accepts him as a servant. The killing and eating must be taken as present only figuratively in the tale. Crohoore demonstrates with the giants how to be a trickster, how to violate the cultural taboos, in this case against lying and cheating. I would claim that Fionan 'eats the trickster' – that is, absorbs Crohoore's teaching and uses it against the King of Darkness. Although he doesn't lie as Crohoore did, he does steal, as the terms of the test require. More important, his final task is to kill.

To return to the question of boundary-crossings, for each time that Fionan ransoms the corpse with a shilling in order to put it underground, the Grateful Dead Man encroaches on the territory of a giant, forcing him underground and extracting a huge ransom, the livestock, the treasure, and a magic object. These objects gained by Crohoore in the preliminary tests must then be used by Fionan alone in the basic test. He crosses the

more usual boundary of water in gaining entry to the other world and brings back diamond rings, which are less treasure than 'pledges,' successive bindings of the princess to the evil king. The circle of the ring symbolizes unity and eternity; the princess is being coerced into a pernicious at-one-ment which can be finally broken only by bringing the head of the dark king across the boundary. Since this royal creature is more taboo than Crohoore, the initiation process is appropriately closer to Douglas's paradigm: not only does Fionan approach and hold the dark king; he actually kills him. In bringing the head across the boundary into this world he treats it as though the King of Greece were a novice who was being offered the opportunity to eat the tabooed creature. 'At breakfast next morning, when the King of Greece came down, the King of Darkness's head was sitting on the table before him' (*Well* 136). This reversal of roles is one we have already seen, when the thirteenth son of the King of Erin forced his prospective father-in-law to humble himself. Fionan's action has even more point in Jungian theory: the King of Darkness is in reality an alter ego for the King of Greece, acting out his unacknowledged desire not to give up his daughter. In any case, Fionan's act makes possible the true at-one-ment, his marriage with the liberated princess.

The theories of both Jung and Douglas are concerned with the integration of previously separated elements. The boundary is in his case between conscious and unconscious mental energy, in hers between culturally acceptable and taboo actions. In both systems the boundary must be crossed if a limited consciousness or society is to be enlarged and invigorated by a necessary unification of the forbidden. Her category of 'dirt' is general enough to include not only his 'shadow' but the other figures across the boundary of the unconscious. According to this correlation, the 'anima' and the 'wise old man' should also demonstrate signs of being taboo. And in fact they do: both can appear immoral (while actually being merely amoral); the anima is intricately tied in with the incest taboo, the dark side of the wise old man with the taboo against patricide; but to absorb either is to approach at-one-ment.

These correlations between the two systems of thought are gratifying, since Douglas's comes from a broad knowledge of different cultures and Jung's from a broad knowledge of psychic phenomena. But perhaps the parallels are not so surprising either; like Mircea Eliade, these two system-

atizers take seriously the religious and the spiritual. An increasing recognition of the convergence of spiritual principles across history and geography is one of the more reassuring developments of our time.

In the next chapter I want to take up a tale that has an even deeper spiritual level than 'The King of Greece's Daughter.' This Irish tale begins with an archaic motif we have already seen in the Egyptian story of 'The Two Brothers,' includes another Grateful Dead Man, and ends with the hero confronting his anima more directly than in the tale we have just discussed.

9 The Treasure Hard To Obtain

IN THIS CHAPTER we are going to deal with a tale that allows a closer look at the integration theme which I have insisted is so important in wonder tales. The oppositions and symmetries of this tale provide a more complex and profound structure than we have investigated since chapter one. Its unravelling will demand the application of a number of the insights we have gained in the last few chapters.

In considering the ancient Egyptian tale at the beginning of chapter eight, I noted a motif which became attached to an international tale-type called the Clever Horse. Usually, according to Thompson,

> the quest for the princess in this tale is caused by the sight of a beautiful hair which has been found floating down a stream and which is shown to the king, who will not rest until the faraway princess to whom the hair belongs has been found. (*Folktale* 63)

In the wonder tale it is usually the light coming from the hair that makes it special to the hero. In the Egyptian tale the hair attracts by its scent; in the Irish tale I am about to turn to, its touch makes first the hero and then the king fall in love. The king sends the hero on a quest for the golden-haired woman.

BARANOIR, SON OF A KING IN ERIN, AND THE DAUGHTER OF KING UNDER THE WAVE

A KING with twelve sons and twelve daughters asked his old Druid how to marry them without ruining himself. The Druid advised him to marry them to each other. The youngest son, whose name was Baranoir (Borr' on oh ir), determined to leave home rather than marry his oldest sister. Walking by the river, he saw a beautiful golden hair floating in it. The moment he caught up the hair, he was in love with the woman from whose head it had come. Staying the night at a king's castle, he took out the hair. The king saw it, and as soon as he touched it, he also fell in love with the unknown woman and commanded Baranoir to bring her to him.

As Baranoir walked off on his quest the next day, he met eight men gathered round a coffin. Four wanted to bury it, while the other four would not let them until they were paid the five gold pieces owed them by the dead man. Baranoir paid the debt with the last of his money and walked on. In a few days he came to a river where a man was fishing. Borrowing his rod, Baranoir caught a salmon, which the fisherman cooked for him. The fisherman preserved all the juice that dripped from the salmon in a bottle and himself refused to have any of the salmon. After being accepted as Baranoir's servant, he revealed his own name, Gansaol, and that of the fish, the Blind Salmon of Great Virtue. Having eaten it, Baranoir was destined always to be successful in whatever he undertook.

After a few days they came to a broad river; a young and beautiful woman on the other side offered to ferry them across if Baranoir would undertake a quest to cure the seven kings of Gleann Glas (Glan Gloss). Baranoir agreed and was given a key that would open a gate inside which he would see a bridle. The woman told him to put it on a dun filly that would appear and to ride the filly if he were able. When the filly had tried without success to throw Baranoir, she spoke to him and also gave him helpful advice. Following it, Baranoir took three bottlesful of water from the River of Enchantment as they were crossing it.

When they came to the castle of Gleann Glas, Baranoir discovered that the seven kings were in a continuous state of weakness 'through the power' of the 'daughter of King Under the Wave' (*Irish Folk-Tales* 58). Thanks to Gansaol and the filly, Baranoir had water from the River of Enchantment and juice from the Blind Salmon of Great Virtue, both of

which were necessary to counteract the spell. Once freed and well, the kings helped Baranoir with more advice.

The woman of the golden hair turned out to be the same daughter of King Under the Wave who had enchanted the kings. In order to win her, Baranoir had first to get some water from the Well of Fortune. To find this well, he and Gansaol had to stay on the filly while she jumped on to the Wheel of the World which would take them to the Eastern World where the well was located. The filly was successful in leaping on to the wheel, keeping on top of it as it rolled, and then jumping off when they reached their destination. The kings had advised Baranoir to dismount at this point and let Gansaol carry on to the well, because only he could survive 'being scalded with boiling water and poison from the Well of Fate' (59) which lay on the way. Gansaol did carry on and, when the filly was scalded by the well, continued alone to the Well of Fortune, with water from which he then cured her.

At this point the filly revealed that, besides the well water, Baranoir would also need to get the Sword of Light and would have to take both to the daughter of King Under the Wave if he were to have any hope of winning her. The sword was owned by three hags whom Baranoir was able to overcome by striking each with a bottle from the River of Enchantment. Again it was Gansaol accompanied by the filly who went into their castle, where the 'magic and poison around the sword' (61) would have killed Baranoir if he had entered.

Having retrieved the sword, they mounted the filly, which got back on the Wheel of the World; as they returned, she gave Baranoir advice about facing the tests at the castle of King Under the Wave. When they arrived at the castle, which was in truth under the sea, the king's daughter came out; she was so beautiful that Baranoir knew that it was from her head that the golden hair, which he still 'carried in his bosom' (62) had fallen. As the filly had warned, the king's daughter asked Baranoir a riddle on each of the three days he spoke with her. The first two were more like questions. First, 'How many years since the first stone was laid in the castle of Gleann Glas?' Baranoir provided the answer given him by the filly: 'Four thousand, four hundred and eighty.' Second, 'How many years since the youngest King of Gleann Glas was born?' Again Baranoir was able to answer with precision: 'Three thousand, three hundred and sixty.' The third was a proper riddle: 'Where is the middle of the world?' (61). Baranoir gave the correct answer, 'Between your two feet,' along with its

justification: 'Measure the world around you in every direction, and if the middle of it isn't between your two feet take the head off me!' (61)

Having answered all of her riddles, Baranoir propounded one of his own (supplied by the filly): 'How many quarts of water are in the ocean?' The daughter of King Under the Wave was unable to measure the ocean in the eighteen hours that Baranoir allotted her. He therefore claimed to have won a third of her. For the other two thirds he had to pass two dangerous tests which she proposed. The first was that he jump into a cauldron of boiling water and poison. If he came out whole, then she would jump in. 'If I come out in health you'll have the head lost; if I perish you will be free' (62), she proclaimed. On the filly's advice, Baranoir washed himself with water from the Well of Fortune and came out of the cauldron 'in health.' The king's daughter also washed herself, only Gansaol had replaced the bottle of water which she had got from the Well of Fortune with a bottle of plain water. When she sprang in, 'the flesh fell from her bones and every drop of blood went from her body. "Oh, I'm lost!" cried she' (62). But at Baranoir's direction, Gansaol gave her three drops of the juice of the Blind Salmon of Great Virtue, and she was restored to her former health and beauty. Baranoir had won two-thirds of her.

On the next day came the final test. The daughter of King Under the Wave demanded that they engage in a sword fight

'... to know who is stronger and who has greater skill, you or I. If I cannot take the head off you with one of the first three blows I make at it, you'll be free; if you are able to take the head off me with the first blow and spare me, you'll have me living and won. If you can take the head off me and take it, you'll have me dead.'

While they were talking, Gansaol took the sword of the king's daughter, and put the sword which Baranoir had brought from Erin in the place of it. (63)

Using the Sword of Light, Baranoir staved off her three blows, the princess not noticing the switch because, as the filly had predicted 'there is so much magic in the scabbard that she'll think she has the right sword' (61). Now it was Baranoir's turn.

The first blow he drew he stopped his hand half way and said: 'I might have taken the head off you if I wanted it.'

'You might,' replied she, 'and you have won me altogether.' (63)

He had won her, however, seemingly only to hand her over to the king who had sent him on the quest. But this problem was solved in an unexpected way.

Now his two helpers demanded payment for their aid and advice. The filly asked for juice from the salmon and water from the well. When given

them, she was transformed into a woman as beautiful as the king's daughter. In fact, 'it would have failed any stranger to know one from the other' (63). Taking the two women back to Erin, Baranoir presented the recently transformed one to the king who had sent him on the quest. The king took her for the woman from whose head the golden hair had come and asked her to marry him. She refused him and went back to her brothers, the seven kings of Gleann Glas. Like them she had been bound by the magic of the daughter of King Under the Wave, first as the ferry-woman and then as the filly, but Baranoir had finally freed her with the juice and water, just as he had earlier freed them.

Now Gansaol asked for his wages for serving Baranoir. Although he could have demanded half of what Baranoir had got, Gansaol asked for only five gold pieces. This, he reminded Baranoir, was what he had paid to allow a corpse to be buried. Gansaol was that grateful dead man: 'My debt is paid; now I will leave this world and your service ... Good health to you now and long life' (64).

LIKE BATA and Cinderella (in one variant), Baranoir refuses to be a party to incest. This refusal precipitates his adventures, in what may appear to be an escape from the original difficulty. But Baranoir's resolution of the incest problem is only a part of a larger theme of integration. To appreciate this process, we must begin with a look at the importance of boundaries in this tale.

Baranoir comes to four rivers, two offering items that further his development, two serving as important barriers which he has help in crossing. After his initial refusal of a sexual relation with his sister, his next opportunity for engagement comes via the golden hair in the river. Then, after his first good deed (paying the five gold pieces), he receives his reward through the fisherman at the next river. It is as though the gold pieces given away on land are the necessary connection between the gold hair of desire in the first river and the salmon in the second, which gives the hero the qualities necessary for success in the quest. Rivers are clearly connected with destiny or the breaking through of the other world into this one. Gansaol's function as officiating priest and his knowledge of the extra-natural origin of the salmon immediately connect the river with the supernatural.

At the next river the two meet another more-than-human person, the woman who ferries them across and also gives Baranoir both advice and aid. First she gives him the key that allows him to get through a gate that

separates him from her true gift, the filly. But the next part of the test he has to pass on his own: withstanding the filly's attempts to throw him off and not speaking to her until she speaks to him. The filly then brings him to the last river, most obviously supernatural and a kind of boundary on the other world, the River of Enchantment. Once past it, Baranoir will truly be launched into the magic world of adventure. A sign of the added significance of this crossing is his passing a third test set by the filly: being able to fill three bottles with water magic for use in the other world.

Baranoir then comes to a castle and strikes 'the pole of combat'; when a messenger appears, he demands combat in the traditional way of Irish wonder-tale heroes. But that demand is inappropriate here, for the messenger tells him that this castle belongs to the seven kings of Gleann Glas who are confined to it by a spell of weakness put on them by the daughter of King Under the Wave. Rather than defeating opponents in combat, Baranoir is destined to further his own quest by relieving the afflictions of others. Having cured them of the weakness that has debilitated the eldest king for so long, Baranoir is rewarded by being given directions for getting to the Well of Fortune.

The Eastern world often contains the magic object sought by questing heroes in Irish wonder tales. Usually, however, the hero fights at least one battle to get the object, creature, or substance that he has come for. Again, Baranoir is exceptional. As usual in this type of tale, it is the servant who actually gets what is needed.[1] In this case, Gansaol leaves behind first Baranoir and then the filly when she is hurt by the Well of Fate. His immunity to deathly agents is appropriate, though the reader cannot know this until Gansaol is revealed as a revenant at the end of the tale.

The filly again becomes Baranoir's guide for the next part of the tale. She takes them to the castle of the three evil hags who own the Sword of Light. Here Baranoir comes closer to actually fighting for what he needs. Instead of open combat with a giant or an army, however, he defeats three women by throwing bottles against their heads. Hags are not generally poor opponents; we have seen, for instance, that the hag of the sea is the most deadly obstacle that Sean has to face, but the way in which Baranoir is instructed to dispatch these three takes away most of the suspense and glory. When the hags have been overcome, Gansaol again goes in to retrieve the needed object, this time braving 'spear points as sharp as needles' set in 'every floor in the castle.' But these are 'nothing to the metal-soled hoofs of the filly, and still less to the feet of Gansaol' (61).

Having returned from the Eastern world, Baranoir is ready to undertake the final stage in his quest. Ostensibly, he is bringing the Sword of Light as a gift to the daughter of King Under the Wave. His having won it and brought it is implicit assertion of his right to seek her hand. The fact is that she would use the sword to dispatch him if she could. The guarded nature of the courtship is evident from the beginning: 'Baranoir and the king's daughter began to talk, and, before the day was over, she asked him how long since the first stone was laid in the castle of Gleann Glas, and he answered her question' (62). By the third day, however, the competitive nature of the relation becomes open when he asks her to measure the sea and stipulates a time-limit for receiving the answer.

Her first two questions point to a paradox which is common in such tales: what is most difficult is actually most easy. The king's daughter attempts to intimidate the candidate by reference to her power: she has held the eldest king captive since his castle was built, over four thousand years before. But in fact this seeming strength is really the chink in her armour. Though weak captives incapable of defending themselves or their castle when challenged, the kings are alive and possess the information that has allowed them to guide a suitable candidate to the items he needs to overcome their adversary. This point is underlined by the fact that the identity of their liberator has been prophesied: before Baranoir reveals his identity to them, they tell him that 'there is nothing to cure us till Baranoir, a king's son from Erin, comes here' (58–9). Baranoir is fulfilling the destiny which the previous action of the king's daughter makes possible but which his own nature must merit.

Her third question, 'Where is the centre of the world,' is not only a riddle but focuses on a profound theme.[2] The Rees brothers emphasize the importance of the centre in Celtic tradition, connecting it with the mythology of India (*Celtic Heritage* 146–7) and with the world-wide tradition of the navel of earth (159). They also report that

> ... in Ireland one may still be confronted with the riddle: 'Where is the middle of the world?' The correct answer is 'Here' or 'Where you are standing.' The same question appears in versions of [a] medieval European tale ... The riddle is in harmony with the *Rig Veda*'s five points: north, south, east, west, and 'here.' The directions are orientated around wherever one 'is.' (187)

Obviously, in giving the correct answer to this riddle, Baranoir is giving much more. He is showing that he understands the secret of orientation

in a complex universe. The implied power in such knowledge is something he very much needs if he is to win a beautiful young woman who had the power to cast and sustain a spell for over four thousand years. The suggestion of equality in this answer is followed by the assertion of superiority to her in his propounding a question he knows she will not be able to answer in the allotted time.

The last two tests, both proposed by the king's daughter, finally involve Baranoir in the only acute physical danger he undergoes. Both in effect make up for earlier missed opportunities. The first, 'the cauldron of boiling water and poison,' matches the Well of Fate which spurted out 'boiling water and poison' and which Baranoir had had to let Gansaol face in his stead. Now, however, Baranoir himself must be immersed in the deadly contents of the cauldron. He springs in and, with the aid of the water Gansaol obtained from the Well of Fortune, is able to come out whole. The king's daughter, in contrast, has the flesh fall from her body because she unknowingly used plain water as her presumed protection. Baranoir has her restored with three drops from the Blind Salmon of Great Virtue. The use of this juice rather than water from the River of Enchantment or the Well of Fortune is particularly appropriate. The king's daughter has some authority over the latter since she already had some of its water (until Gansaol stole it). The River of Enchantment is even easier of access, but the salmon belongs solely to Baranoir.

The last test is also the one that brings out most clearly the nature of the competition between Baranoir and the daughter of King Under the Wave. She tells him that if she cannot cut off his head with one of her first three blows, he will be 'free,' presumably from the testing rights which his coming to court her gave her over him. She also spells out his options: If he can cut off her head, he can take it, a trophy of his victory over a formidable opponent. In that way he will 'have [her] dead.' Or he can have her alive by being able to cut off her head but in refraining from the blow. He chooses the latter, of course, but the fact that she is still specifying the terms shows the superiority of position which his courtship has given her. And the fact that one option she offers is her own death demonstrates her impersonal recognition that it has been a deadly competition in which his death could have occurred at several points, so that a desire for revenge may well be expected.

Baranoir's contest with the daughter of King Under the Wave brings up the whole problem of the meaning of the hero's relation to the opposite

sex. The Reeses compare the winning of a wife with the winning of 'such objects as the Sword of Light.' They conclude that '"wooings" are thus a variant of the quest for "the treasure hard to obtain" which man needs for his wholeness and fulfilment, a treasure which must ever be wrested from the grasp of an indefatigable foe' (271). Usually, as they imply, the foe is not the princess but her father, who imposes the tests or puts the obstacles in the hero's way.

The wonder tale about Baranoir is one of the few in which the bride is a voluntary opponent. The more typical test connected with the Grateful Dead Man tale is the one we saw in 'The King of Greece's Daughter': the hero must disenchant her by cutting off the head of the evil being whom she visits. As Marie Louise von Franz points out in her discussion of the German version of that tale, frequently the killing of the rival is not sufficient to win the princess. In some tales the princess must be beaten; in others she must be bathed. 'The washing of the anima ... means the purging of the demonic elements in her as well as the purging of her link with death' (*Psychology of Fairy Tales* 118). This observation is especially relevant to the dangerous bath that almost kills the daughter of King Under the Wave.

We are now in a position to consider the connection between the hero's winning the treasure and his attainment of wholeness. This constitutes a process of integration. The key to the process lies in the beginning of the story. Baranoir leaves home because his father wants to marry him to his oldest daughter. In refusing to break the incest taboo, he may be seen as denying the opportunity for a reinvigoration of the sort discussed by Mary Douglas. In older tales, in Ireland as in Egypt, culture-heroes often break this taboo. The Rees brothers note that 'incestuous unions are frequent in lineages of the Mythological Cycle, and that certain Irish tribes traced their descent from a founder born of incest' (*Celtic Heritage* 233). Baranoir differs from these Irish heroes in his direct refusal to commit incest. But rather than making at-one-ment impossible, his purity simply displaces the problem.

Baranoir's helping the dead to be buried shows a form of moral piety which is consonant with his previous refusal to break a taboo. The positive reward for that act of charity comes immediately in the form of a helper who indirectly guides him to the Blind Salmon of Great Virtue and advises him in the proper use of it. In other words, the initial charity leads to an early assurance of future success. But that success will come only after a number of tests.

The preliminary test is, of course, the good deed he does in paying for the burial of the corpse. His reward is a helper, Gansaol, one of the 'grateful dead.' But Baranoir actually has two helpers. He wins the filly by passing another preliminary test, being able to stay mounted on her when she tries to throw him. Having won only his helpers, however, Baranoir is not finished with the preliminary test. With their help he must still win the objects he needs for success: the salmon juice, the bottles of river water, the well water, and the Sword of Light. The basic test does not come until he faces the daughter of King Under the Wave. Baranoir evades the additional test: instead of proving his right to his consort before the king who sent him for her, he presents the king with the disenchanted filly as the woman with shining hair. What these two women actually represent in this hero's experience is his chance to work through the implications of his initial refusal to break the incest taboo.

Even before Baranoir meets his second helper as a filly, she appears as a beautiful young woman. Her help is coupled with a request. He is to cure seven kings who are bound by a spell of weakness. These kings represent the condition of masculine authority in the other world. That condition is to be contrasted with masculine authority in Erin: Baranoir's father who demands incest and the king who demands that Baranoir bring back the girl with the golden hair. These two kings are powerful, but they exercise an arbitrary, unrighteous authority. The seven kings beyond the River of Enchantment are impotent, but they retain clear minds and a sense of justice. They give aid and advice to Baranoir on his quest, an unspoken aspect of which must be to right the imbalance between male and female, this world and the other.

Finally Baranoir meets the daughter of King Under the Wave. She represents the deepest-dwelling denizen of the other world. The strength and directness of her opposition is unusual in the wonder tale because she has stronger than usual reasons for opposing Baranoir. Accepting Freud's argument that the incest taboo acknowledges the strength of a real attraction, I would conclude that in denying his sister, Baranoir is denying an unadmitted desire in himself. Such a rejection makes more difficult the winning of any member of the opposite sex. Paradoxically, it also makes him even more subject to that sex: Jung argues that fate may be seen as the appearance from outside of the force that is denied inside. Immediately after refusing incest, Baranoir finds in a river the hair that causes him to fall irretrievably in love with a woman he has never seen. His quest

to gain her can in one sense be viewed as an attempt to connect inner and outer passion.

The circumstances of his success indicate the continuing relevance of the original problem with incest. We should note the return, at the same time that Baranoir brings his bride to Erin from the undersea kingdom, of another female to the other world: the transformed filly, to whom Baranoir has been close throughout most of his quest. According to conventional ideas of a happy ending, this wonder tale should be rounded off with a double marriage, as was 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island.' But the fact that this potential queen (sister of seven kings) should refuse marriage to a king in Erin in order to rejoin her brothers in the other world indicates some other principle at work. It could be simply that this king is not deserving, or that she would be marrying under false pretences, but I think that the situation is more involved.

We might begin by asking why there are so many brothers. In dreams multiplication of number is often a device for emphasis. I think it is in this tale as well. It should remind us that Baranoir is the youngest of twelve brothers who were to marry their sisters. From this point of view his returning to Erin with a non-sister as his bride is balanced by the exit from Erin of a woman who chooses to live with her brothers. Her loyalty to them when they were weak and impotent is understandable. Her returning to live with them when they are healthy and presumably could find their own mates seems odd. It makes sense to me only by relation to Baranoir's original dilemma. Whereas Baranoir's righteous rejection of an overtly sexual union with his sister leads to a royal marriage, this potential queen rejects a royal marriage in order to take care of her brothers. This symmetrical reversal of their histories suggests that hers is a compensation for his. In Freudian terms, her devoting her life to not one but seven brothers is an overcompensation based on guilt, not hers but Baranoir's, for unconsciously desiring the sister he rejected. At the same time, Baranoir's actions during the tale have made possible the external answer to this original problem: he reappears in Erin with a more-than-acceptable wife.

In terms of the integration theme, the powerful principle from the lower realm is liberated into action in the upper or conscious realm, while a borderline figure, the ferrywoman, is allowed to sink back into the lower realm, but after serving as helper and guide to Baranoir there. Since she

and her brothers are conscious of their debt to him and he of his to them, the separation is not a cause for doubting the viability of his integration; her re-entry to the other world can be taken as a positive counterbalance to the emancipation of the king's daughter.

By sticking to his principles, Baranoir has won through to wholeness. Where his father worried about his physical kingdom but not its psychic well-being, Baranoir shows that he values worldly wealth little when he gives away his last five gold pieces. He is concerned with another kind of gold, the hair from the river that resonates with his feeling problem; it leads him on a quest which could be disastrous, except that his charity ensures him a proper helper in Gansaol. By mounting the filly, Baranoir and Gansaol give themselves over to the positive version of the lower principle, to the instinctual animal side which is a necessary complement to Baranoir' high moral nature. Gansaol, too, though rewarding Baranoir's piety, is there to do the dirty work, as is especially evident in his trickster actions at the end, when he substitutes common water and a common sword for the magic healing water and the lethal sword of the king's daughter. Paradoxically, Baranoir's high-minded adherence to good principles brings him a helper to do the low deeds that wonder-tale heroes often have to accomplish if they are to triumph in either world.

Seen as a quest for integration, this story contains behind its multiplicity of images and incidents a basically simple symmetry of action and structure. Baranoir as the conscious, time-bound, land-born, unfinished person seeks the king's daughter, an unconscious, timeless, sea-living, morally ambiguous power. His willingness to acknowledge his shadow earns him a tricky male counterpart who forwards his cause. The experience of the anima is symmetrical. Her haughty power has evoked a humble double who works against her or, as the reader experiences it, for Baranoir.[3] She is the shadow of the king's daughter. Because unacknowledged, she seems to work against that powerful ruler of the other world. From the point where Baranoir and Gansaol meet the ferrywoman-filly, the success of the quest is assured. It is as though each side has unknowingly freed a complementary guide to bring together the two extremes. The hidden power of the watery realm has been brought up to land. The self-abnegating morality of the principled hero has been tempered with desire, immersion, and attainment. The results of some ancient, anonymous shanachie's combining two tale-types might have been a mere redundancy of function: either the Grateful Dead Man or the

Clever Horse would have sufficed to help Baranoir towards success. But as I have just suggested, the connection of Gansaol with Baranoir and the filly with the king's daughter creates a profound thematic resonance.

Like Cinderella, Baranoir wins through to a marriage at the end. But whereas she is safely insulated from the punishment suffered by her sisters, he is very much involved in the violence in his tale. Similarly, Cinderella's Prince Charming is merely a colourless convenience, while Baranoir's wife is the source of evil in the tale, directly confronted and dealt with. This is not to say that 'Cinderella' is an inadequate tale. In the Grimm version, as opposed to the prettified Perrault one, there is a valid conflict and a complex theme, as Bettelheim demonstrates. But it goes no further than would benefit a child, while the Irish tale treats the preliminaries to marriage in such a way as to bring out all the ambivalance of that more adult problem. And the problem is resolved in this world, not by a cold use of fate, as in 'The Two Brothers' and the Tsimshian tale of the boy who became an archetypal frog-provider. The helpers, Gansaol and the sister of the seven kings, are allowed to return to that other world, but Baranoir successfully brings the daughter of King Under the Wave into this world as his active human consort. The Sword of Light, which neither has to begin with, is now safely in the hands of a male who has shown restraint in its use. His answer to the key riddle is as true in Erin as it was in the land under the wave: the middle of the world is always between the two feet of the person who cares to be centred.

10 The Ravens of Life

TO DISCOVER that two tales belong to the same type is not to conclude that they will have identical themes. The best way to illustrate how they may differ will be to consider in this chapter another tale which belongs to the type known as the Clever Horse, to which 'Baranoir' also belongs. In both tales a young man finds a woman's hair, shows it to his king, and is ordered to go on a quest for her. With the aid of a clever horse, he finds and brings her back to the king; at the end of both he actually marries her himself. Despite this identity of plot outline, however, the two tales have quite different themes. Part of the difference in 'The Haggary Nag,' the tale we are about to consider, is a generally simpler plot with fewer motifs than that of 'Baranoir.' For instance, it lacks the Grateful Dead sequence altogether. But more important, among the three main characters there develops a very different relationship which generates significant thematic patterns. The central theme of 'The Haggary Nag' can be paralleled to a Celtic ceremony that has its narrative counterpart in an antique Irish tale with which we shall begin our inquiry.

In 'The Haggary Nag,' the king uses the hero to bring him the far-off princess and satisfy her subsequent demands. At the end he dies like the false suitor he is, and the hero and princess become the rulers of the land. This ending is, of course, more conventional than that of 'Baranoir,' but it invests the convention of the ruling couple with a pagan concept of great power.

The princess in 'The Haggary Nag' functions as an embodiment of 'the sovereignty of the land,' a Celtic belief that has an ancient heritage.[1] In *Celtic Mythology*, Proinsias MacCana informs us that the inauguration ceremony of Irish kings was known as the *banais righi* (bon' nish ree),

'wedding-feast of kingship,' and that it had 'two main elements, a libation offered by the bride to her partner and the coition' (120).[2]

> As a result of this union the person of the goddess is sometimes utterly transformed. Just as the land lies barren and desolate in the absence of its destined ruler and is quickly restored to life by his coming, so the goddess who personifies the kingdom often appears ugly, unkempt and destitute until united with her rightful lord, when suddenly she is changed into a woman of shining beauty. (120)

A famous tale which illustrates this relation is the story of Niall and the Loathly Hag.[3]

NIALL AND THE LOATHLY HAG

NIALL (Nee'ul) was the son of a king, but his mother was a lesser woman than the queen, who made her a drawer of water after she became pregnant with Niall. Giving birth in the middle of the day, Niall's mother was so afraid of the queen's anger that she returned to work immediately, leaving her son unattended. He was rescued by a poet, who took him off and raised him. Brought to Tara when grown, Niall was so impressive a youth that the court thought he should succeed his father, though the queen insisted that the next king should be a son of hers. The sons were put to various tests, from which Niall emerged winner. The most striking of these tests was an unplanned incident at the end of a hunt. Being thirsty, each of the brothers in turn went to a well to get water. But each was put off by an ugly old hag who guarded the well and demanded a kiss before she would part with any water. Niall was the last to go to her; his response to her request was positive:

> *'Give me water, O woman,' said Niall.*
>
> *'I will give it,' she answered, 'but first give me a kiss.'*
>
> *'Besides giving thee a kiss, I will lie with thee!' Then he threw himself down upon her and gave her a kiss. But then, when he looked at her, there was not in the world a damsel whose figure or appearance was more lovable than hers! ... Shining pearly teeth she had, an eye large and queenly.* (511–12)

When Niall asked who she was, she replied, 'O king of Tara, I am the Sovereignty' (152). She went on to predict which of his offspring would

also rule and to advise him how to forestall his half-brothers. Thus he became king.

AS MacCANA points out, this tale was used by the 'great dynasty of the Ui Neill, the descendents of Niall' (*Celtic Mythology* 117) to strengthen their claim to the throne. But the basic tale is obviously archaic. The union with the hag can be compared with the king's union with the mare of which Giraldus wrote. Both Niall and the twelfth-century king debase themselves before they are elevated to royal status. Both thus pass a kind of test of their fitness to be king. In the wonder tale we are now going to turn to, the woman is deadly rather than ugly, but she does shine and she does set tests. Unlike Baranoir's opponent, the daughter of King Under the Wave, this decisive woman not only marries the one who passes them but thereby elevates him to the kingship.

THE HAGGARY NAG

ONCE THERE WAS a widow whose only son, Cathal, decided to go seek his fortune in the world. She asked him whether he wanted to take with him half of what she had prepared with her blessing or all of it without the blessing. He chose half with the blessing and travelled on his way until he came to a castle where he took service with a king. As the stable boy, Cathal was required to care for ninety-nine beautiful horses that the king prized. But the king also told him to give no care to feeding or grooming another horse, a 'poor, miserable, haggary, ugly-looking, little nag of a pony' (*Well* 139). Despite the king's advice, Cathal took pity on the nag and treated it if anything better than the others. Before long, 'he had the haggary nag itself handsomer and nicer than any one of the other ninety-nine horses; and the more care he gave it, the more delight he took in it, and the fonder of it he grew' (140). He also 'cleaned, and polished its saddle and bridle till he had them looking brighter than all the other saddles and bridles in the place' (140).

After working for three months, Cathal was sent by the king as a messenger to the King of Spain. Told he might ride the best horse in the stables, Cathal chose the nag. 'As they went Cathal was surprised, for the haggary nag sped so fast that his feet only touched the tops of the highest hills; he overtook the wind afore him, and the wind behind couldn't

overtake him' (140–1). And as they went, the nag spoke and praised Cathal for his kind heart and good treatment, promising to repay him when it could. On the way back, Cathal saw, 'lying on the road, something shining as bright as the sun. When he drew to it and went to pick it up, what was it but a lady's hair, and it gave light for three miles on every side' (141). The nag warned him not to take it, but Cathal said he wanted it to provide him with light at night in the stable. So he did take it back with him, and it was as though the stable had daylight at night.

One night the king went to the stable and was amazed to see this light. Cathal told him what it was and how he came by it. The king was unsettled by the hair. Three days later he went back to Cathal and said:

The lady that owned that hair I want for my wife. I must have her, and you are the man to find her for me. Whether or not she lives within the ends of the world you'll have three months to find and to fetch her here. And if you fail you'll lose your head. (143)

Downhearted, Cathal went to the nag, which reminded him of its warning but promised to help look for the lady.

They set off the next day; at the end of a week they came on the White Mare of the Rowan Tree, with whom they stayed the night. She said that 'the lady who owned that hair was the Princess of the Hill of the World's End' (144) who lived so far away that the mare couldn't tell Cathal how to get there. But she did give him directions for getting to her sister, the Brown Mare of the Oak-Tree Wood. She also gave him a bottle of magic ointment to rub on himself and the nag, to protect them from a forest of sharp spears they would have to go through on the way.

The ointment worked, and Cathal and the nag arrived safely at the Oak-Tree Wood, where they were put up for the night by the Brown Mare. She in turn sent them on to a third sister, the Black Mare of the Pine-Tree Wood. She also gave them a bottle of the Water of Life to drink as a protection from the wide River of Deadly Poison they would have to cross. Arriving safely again, they spent the night with the Black Mare. She was able to direct them to the castle of the Princess of the Hill of the World's End, and to give them a bottle of scent to smell and keep them from being overpowered by the fumes of the Lake of Burning Brimstone through which they had to pass.

The Black Mare told them it was the habit of the princes to order

... 'everyone put to death that ever goes into her presence and looks on her – except on one particular hour of one particular day in every seven years. And that is,' says

the Black Mare, 'the hour when she is combing [it; then] ... she hasn't the power to put anyone to death – and moreover, she hasn't the power to refuse then any reasonable request.' (146)

Since that day was coming in a week's time, she urged Cathal to arrive there then. He and the nag set off, and on the seventh day

... they reached the Hill of the World's End, and there they saw a great castle with three hundred and sixty-five windows, every window looking a different way. And every window of the three hundred and sixty-five was shining with a light that was brighter and more brilliant far than the sun – for at that very hour the princess was combing her golden hair within. (147)

Falling on his knees in front of the princess, Cathal made his reasonable request, that the princess sit on his lovely horse for a moment. She agreed, but as soon as she mounted, Cathal leaped up behind, and the nag carried them back the way they had come. Again they passed safely through the three obstacles, the nag never stopping until they reached the castle of Cathal's master.

The king was overjoyed to see such a beautiful princess and asked her to marry him. But the princess said she 'wouldn't marry anyone only him that would bring her three drops from the hearts of the Ravens of Life, that lived on the island three thousand miles beyond the Hill of the World's End' (149). This request distressed the king, until he went to the stable and ordered Cathal to go get what the princess demanded.

Cathal mounted the nag and retraced his previous route, staying the night again with each of the mares. The last one gave him a silver whistle to blow when he arrived at the Hill of the World's End. Cathal did as directed; after the first loud blast of the whistle, all the birds of the air began to arrive, all except the three Ravens of Life. After the second blast, they still did not come. But after the third, he saw three black specks that gradually grew larger and larger

... till at last they were so near and so big that the wings of them shut out the sky; and though it was only noon it was as black as midnight all around. But lo and behold you! though the Ravens came, there they flew about in the sky above, and wouldn't come down, at all, to perch on the Hill. (150)

The nag told Cathal that only one thing would bring the ravens down, a dead body. Cathal must kill the nag, drag out its entrails, and hide in the carcass, and then kill the ravens when they came down to feed. But Cathal refused to kill his helper, even when the nag told him it could be brought back to life by three drops of the blood of the Ravens of Life. The nag

therefore offered Cathal another option, for him to fix his dagger firmly in the ground with its blade up. When Cathal had done so, the nag threw itself on the dagger; the point pierced its heart, killing it.

Upset though he was by this action, Cathal did as the nag had previously directed. When the ravens came down to feed upon the entrails, he stuck each in the heart with his dagger. Then he placed three drops of their blood on the nag's tongue, and it came back to life. He gathered three drops of the ravens' blood for the king and, at the nag's suggestion, three more drops for himself. Then they went back to the king and gave him the first three drops. The king presented them in turn to the princess, expecting to be able to marry her. But she had one more stipulation. 'She would only marry the man who would be brave enough to do what she would do the next morning – and if the king was that brave she would marry him without more delay' (152).

Next day a crowd had gathered at the castle to see what the princess would do and whether the king would do it too. The princess appeared and 'asked for a hundred of the king's bodyguard to stand in a solid square beneath the tower of the castle, with their spears pointing up in the air – then she would leap from the tower on the spear points' (152). Climbing to the top of the tower, the princess swallowed the three drops of blood from the Ravens of Life. Then she jumped down on to the spear points and was taken off uninjured. In his desire for the princess, the king followed her, and fatally impaled himself on his soldiers' spears. Nine other nobles who were also enamoured of the great beauty of the princess lost their lives in the same way.

After that no one would jump from the tower, until the princess called for any brave man to follow her example. Then Cathal climbed up the tower, swallowed his three drops of the blood of the Ravens of Life, and jumped without harm on to the spears of the soldiers. The princess declared she would marry Cathal. While preparations went on, he sent for his mother. 'The most wonderful wedding entirely it was that Ireland ever saw before or since. And they got the whole Kingdom to reign over, as King and Queen' (154).

After Cathal had won the princess, he never saw the nag again. One day when he was feeling downcast about its disappearance, three handsome young men approached him and asked what his trouble was. When he explained, they told him what had happened. The nag, its saddle, and bridle were in reality three princes who had been enchanted by the dead

king. At his death they had been transformed back to human shape. The three men were those princes, now happily married but come back to express their gratitude to Cathal.

AS WE SAW in chapter one, early Irish kings were tested and sometimes found wanting by the 'act of truth'; so the king in this tale lacks the innate bravery which should justify his position. Both his unfitness and Cathal's fitness to rule are revealed by the princess. The hag functions in a similar way with Niall and his half-brothers. But before we can do justice to the similarities between this tale and that of Niall, we must look more closely at Cathal's experience. Obviously, previous relations with women have a bearing on later success. We can speculate, for instance, that Niall's half-brothers find the hag impossible to accept because their mother is a haughty queen, while Niall finds her easier to accept because his own mother was despised. But Cathal's relation to women is capable of more extended investigation.

His tale begins with what I have called a typical circumstance of home-leaving, the mother's offering her blessing if the son takes only half the food she has prepared. In other tales we have seen the hero either leave on bad terms with a parent or be sent off 'for his own good.' We have also seen the difficulty that can come of a parent's accompanying the son on his initial adventure. We might expect that the hero who leaves with his mother's blessing will have a smoother road. While this expectation is not always realized, it is clearly so in this tale.

The next incident involves an even more common and positive experience. Offered a strong inducement to value the sleek and acceptable horses, Cathal chooses to value the 'poor, miserable, haggary' nag. This choice is not only self-reinforcing but develops Cathal's ability to feel: 'the more care he gave it, the more delight he took in it, and the fonder of it he grew.' Because he not only accepts but values the lowly creature, he is rewarded with a shadow-figure that is both vital and wise.

The nag repays his kindness when Cathal starts on his first trip by surprising him with its swiftness, by speaking to him, and by offering help. It also provides advice when Cathal comes upon his temptation: the nag tells him not to pick up the shining hair. When Cathal breaks this interdiction, we know that he will have 'great trouble and woe' (141), as the nag predicts, but we also suspect that he stands to gain more than if he had followed the nag's advice. Cathal had a practical reason for wanting

the hair: it would light the stable for him at night. He has not understood its message yet, even though the hair calls attention to itself. The king, on the other hand, enraptured by its light, 'must have' as his wife the lady from whose head the hair came. Cathal's immediate penalty for violating the nag's interdiction is revealed at the end of the king's speech: 'if you fail you'll lose your head.' The hero begins his quest with a sword over his head.

Considering that Cathal left home with his mother's blessing, it is appropriate that he is helped at regular intervals on the quest by the three mares, motherly creatures who provide food, lodging, and the means of passing safely through the three obstacles he must face. Each points out a route to bring him closer to his goal, the lady of the shining hair. The first mare is able to identify her as the Princess of the Hill of the World's End, and the last one is even able to tell Cathal under what conditions it is safe to approach the princess.

As Cathal nears this hill, he sees his awe-inspiring goal, a castle 'with three hundred and sixty-five windows, every window looking a different way' and every one shining 'more brilliant far than the sun – for at that very hour the princess was combing her golden hair within.' Under natural conditions, we might expect only some windows to reflect the sunlight, but this castle at the end of the world has light coming from all the windows, shining from an inner source, the hair of the princess. This scene, one of two transcendent focal points in the tale, contains quite complex implications.

We speak commonly of the world's ending in either a physical or a temporal manner. Since Cathal, after a long journey, comes to 'the *Hill* of the World's End,' we at first take 'world's end' as geographical. But the reference to the three hundred and sixty-five windows inevitably brings in the temporal. Rather than thinking of the world ending (with a bang, say), we think of completing a cycle or of reaching that point from which the cycle of the year is seen as a whole. That sense of transcendence is intensified by our being told that a source of light brighter than the sun gives life to the scene. On one level it can be taken as a culmination of Cathal's search, begun with his mother's blessing and pursued with the aid of the mares, to reach this brilliant princess whom he is about to take. But behind the brilliance lies another quality which resonates better with the king's cruel warning: Cathal risks death in this quest. As the Black Mare warned him, the princess habitually 'has ordered everyone put to

death that ever goes into her presence and looks on her.' This bright source of life is really an extraordinary death-dealer. Only once in seven years does she comb her hair and light up the castle as Cathal has seen it. And only then can she be safely approached. We understand why Cathal wastes no time, but puts his request, gets the princess on the nag, and rides off from the dangerous castle.

Yet his swift success is impermanent. Once delivered to the king, the princess makes an impossible demand. She wants 'three drops from the hearts of the Ravens of Life' that live on an island far beyond even the Hill of the World's End. 'And no man or mortal,' she says, 'can ever reach there, or get that' (149). Cathal, who is again sent on this quest by the king with the same threat of death for failure, discovers that her last statement is correct. It will be impossible for him to get to this island. Fortunately, the whistle provided by the Black Mare will allow him to bring the ravens to him instead.

When the ravens will not descend, the nag sees immediately what must be done. But it cannot convince Cathal to take the necessary step. He is so committed to the nag that he cannot agree to kill it, even though the nag promises that its death will be only temporary. Cathal's scruples must, therefore, have more to do with his killing than with its dying. We can understand why: Cathal has himself been three times under the shadow of death so far in the story (not counting the three deadly obstacles he and the nag go through). I would suggest that the strength of his unspoken fear and desire not to die is exactly equal to his strong-voiced determination not to kill his helper. In any case, the nag takes on the deed, for which Cathal becomes the naïvely ignorant accomplice when he places his dagger in the ground so the nag may fall on it. Cathal then reluctantly decides to follow the remainder of the nag's directions. He takes out the entrails and lodges himself in the carcass of his animal helper.

Once more successful, Cathal returns with the required blood of the three Ravens of Life. The princess has specified that she would marry only the person who 'would bring' her those drops. The king tries to satisfy the letter of her command by himself presenting her with the drops. But we know that she can be won only by the hero who undertook the two dangerous quests to bring back both her and the blood of the ravens. Her last command in fact tests the proper fulfilment of her first: only the hero who has got the blood from the ravens and brought it to the princess (and saved some for himself) can pass this test. Only he who deserves to be king

will be successful. Her role thus parallels that of 'the sovereignty of the land,' Cathal's marriage to her entailing his becoming king.

The princess actually has a more complex function in Cathal's life than did the loathly hag in Niall's. The hag did little besides lie with Niall and give him advice on how to become king. In contrast, the princess puts Cathal through two tests following their initial encounter, and in each he must face death. He learns far more from these experiences than how to be a king.

The contrast with the daughter of King Under the Wave is instructive. Whereas the princess overtly connects her tests with marriage, the daughter did not. Whereas the daughter aimed hers as riddles directly at a hero who came to challenge her, the princess voices general conditions which are only covertly riddles (as we shall discover in chapter twelve). But what the contest between Cathal and the princess lacks in directness, it more than makes up for in suspense, imagination, and a grand climax, when the final test in public dramatically disposes of the unworthy king and reveals the equal worth of the shining, powerful princess and the poor brave youth.

The nature of the tests set by the princess are worth closer scrutiny. Following the directions of the helpful motherly Black Mare, Cathal originally encountered the princess when she was unable to demand death as she was used to doing. We can see the two tests that she offers as attempts to remedy that situation. The first one forces Cathal to take life, if not the nag's, then the ravens'. The second forces Cathal to give up his own life, or at least to risk it. Where the White Mare had given him a magic ointment that protected him when he rode through the forest of spears, the princess requires of him that he plunge down on to a hundred upraised spears. Although she offers no ointment, she has previously put Cathal in a position to win the blood that will keep him from hurt. The nag made possible his getting that blood and has advised him to set aside three drops. But Cathal alone decides to swallow the blood and to take the plunge on to the spears. He has made the one independent decision and done the one brave deed that certifies him as a worthy hero.

In doing this deed he has not only the model of the nag which earlier plunged on to his dagger but also the example of the princess herself. Her deed also makes her worthy. At the Hill of the World's End she had been able simply to order the death of would-be heroes. Brought to the world of mortals, she must herself become the example for so drastic a test of

mortality. Although she can command the power of the sought-after maiden to make marriage demands, she has given up the absolute power she possessed in her own kingdom.

According to Jungian theory, the anima as the representative of the unconscious feminine nature of man is projected outside on to various kinds of women. The benign motherly side of Cathal's anima is evident in his own mother and in the mares. The witch side of the anima appears in the destructiveness of the princess. But this side seems to be inextricably bound to the enchantingly beautiful side that Cathal sees at the castle. She thus appears as a supremely desirable antagonist. Yet the first indication that he desires her is his decision to climb the tower and jump off it. Similarly, only after Cathal's jump does the princess, seeing 'his bravery and ... himself, ... [fall] instantly in love with him' (154). We may assume it is Cathal's modesty that kept her from 'seeing' him. But after his plunge and, I would urge, after her own, she is able to appreciate the qualities in this man who has brought her out of her own removed kingdom into the more mundane world.

The princess has lived in a perfect world where she was sufficient unto herself; she surpassed the sun in brilliance, triumphed over time in her castle with its 365 windows. But there is a flaw in this seeming perfection: heroes come, and she must put them to death. Probably they come for the same reason Cathal does, because traces of her brilliance made their way into this world. In fact, the princess is not sublimely indifferent but attracted to this world, perhaps in her enjoyment of death, perhaps out of a desire to be rescued. In any case, she meets her rescuer when Cathal arrives.

Goaded by the king's threat of death, aided by the motherly mares, Cathal arrives on the one day the princess can be approached and separated from her realm. He succeeds because he is thoughtful and kind (as he showed with his mother and the nag), because he does not expect anything for himself (he takes her to the king), but also because he is impetuous (as he showed when he first picked up the hair). His daring to ride off with her, like his later plunge from the tower, shows a lack of prudence which is also becoming to a hero. Yet impetuosity may come from mere thoughtlessness, and Cathal is taught to look beneath the surface. His actions must plumb the darkness that can lurk behind brilliant beauty; his sensibility must accept that life can flow from dark corpse-devourers. What he learns justifies his leap to seeming destruction at the end and gives depth to his wedding and coronation.

Cathal might be thought to suffer from a surfeit of motherly help. But though the mares ease his way, they twice help him approach encounters which test him in ways they cannot help him resolve. Reliance on them means dependence and unrealized potential. The princess functions as that part of his own nature which he must discover and value because it alone offers him autonomy. When the first trace of this inner radiance comes into consciousness, Cathal knows enough to value it. His decision to keep and use the hair of light sets the direction of his destiny. That destiny turns out to be the reclaiming of a dangerous treasure. It is destructive both in its own realm and in this world, until Cathal finally commits himself.

If Cathal had followed the nag's advice not to pick up the hair, he could have led a secure and undistinguished life. But even after he chooses the new, he keeps on acting as if it is the old, still depending on the help of the nag and the mares. He refuses to choose until all other options have been cleared away. Then, finally and almost reluctantly, he does the deed which will commit him to the princess and commit her to him.

Destructive in her isolation, the princess is the opposite of Cathal in his unwillingness to take life. Seeing their relation as a kind of dialectic, we might say that his killing the ravens makes her willing to risk her life. But she has still not given up her taste for the death of suitors (which would be gratified by what happens to the king and the nine nobles). Cathal's successful plunge presumably frees her from this compulsion; her desire for death is replaced by love. We are told she 'saw himself.' It is as though she cannot see any man until the life-force in Cathal proves stronger than the death force she has controlled.

The fact that both have survived a plunge towards death means that they are equal, in what they risked, in faith, in swallowing the blood of the entrail-tearing Ravens of Life. But their equality is not an identity; it is more a balanced opposition. Her noble brilliance and his self-effacing kindness have both been tempered but remain as opposite as their sexes. Their equality and their balanced opposition augur a stable union.

In this chapter and the last we have been investigating the themes that appear in two examples of one tale-type. Baranoir and Cathal both demonstrate the necessary virtue of the hero in showing charity and are therefore rewarded with helpers. Both are confronted with unworthy authorities whom they overcome. Both experience the desirable object of their quests as a dangerous tester, but both are equal to the tests. For both, marriage to the princess serves as a successful integration on the

psychic level. These similarities are helpful, but the contrasts seem to me more important.

Baranoir's tests all take place in the other world and are direct contests. Two of Cathal's take place in the other world, but they are not contests. The third test takes place in this world and is comparable to one of Baranoir's: Cathal and the princess plunge in turn on upraised spears; Baranoir and the daughter of King Under the Wave plunge in turn into poison cauldrons. Both spears and cauldron are deadly, but more important, Baranoir tricks his opponent – she would die but for his aid. Cathal more simply attains equality, not superiority. But the key difference is undoubtedly the one I put forward earlier: Cathal's final test takes place in this world and functions as a public confirmation of his right to be united with the sovereignty of the land.

The difference in character between the two heroes is worth further comment. Counselled by his helper, Baranoir is all along more prone to violence than Cathal, who, as we have seen, refuses to harm the nag despite its request and reassurances. Although both heroes learn what it is to face death, Cathal's is the more impressive lesson. Where Baranoir's helpers pass most of the preliminary tests for him, Cathal's nag only takes him to the first test. It does kill itself to provide a carcass for the second test, but Cathal has to pull out the entrails of this dead helper and crawl inside the corpse of his friend. His reluctance to kill underlines the importance of his stabbing the ravens.

More generally, I would like to affirm again the importance of detailed analysis. To show that two tales belong to the same type can too easily lead us to substitute labels for insight. Even to show how a tale has a series of plot functions in the same sequence as all other wonder tales can become a reduction, drawing our attention away from the particular value which I believe each successful wonder tale to contain.

Archetypes, too, can distract. Had I applied the Jungian theory in detail in this chapter and the last, I would have had to discuss the absence or displacement of the wise old man, an investigation that seemed to me to move away from the life of these tales rather than towards it. For that reason I have made mention of only the shadow and anima figures in these two chapters.

My having begun this chapter with a Celtic ritual should suggest that my objection is not to the use of types or functions; it is rather to subordinating the particular tale to the archetype. I have not tried to

argue that the wonder-tale ending is based on Celtic ritual marriage. I would assert only that we should not be surprised if wonder-tale plots often converge towards a ritual or myth; as we saw in the introduction to part one, even tales which re-enter the oral tradition after a sojourn in written form always begin to simplify, often towards the primitive. My use of pagan belief has therefore been more suggestive than definitive. Being aware of the ritual, we can more easily become aware of certain implications of wonder-tale plot development and character relations.

11 Healing and Wholeness

ONE OF the important functions of the wonder tale is to provide a simple and unthreatening presentation and resolution of psychic tensions. An example of such a resolution can be found in 'The Haggary Nag,' in the relation between Cathal and the princess. It can be seen as the relation between a person's conscious active nature and that unconscious potential nature which must be squarely faced if destructive impulses are to be transformed and integrated into a constructive life. I propose to concentrate our attention in this chapter on the question of psychic health and wholeness.

With his long experience collecting oral tales, James Delargy was able to insist that 'many of the old story-tellers believed in all the marvels and magic of the typical wonder-tale' ('Gaelic Story-teller' 182). Although their belief operated on a different level than that of the worshipper of pagan gods, the Irish peasants certainly had superstitions and folk tales about current fairy practice which were not Christian.[1] At one level of the mind, the teller of wonder tales and his listeners did believe in what entranced them night after night.

They received something in return for this allegiance, something positive that modern man may also receive, to the extent that he willingly suspends his disbelief. Disliking the negativity of 'suspending disbelief,' J.R.R. Tolkien provided a more positive rationale for the power of literature than Coleridge's. What really happens, he claimed, is that the story-teller creates 'a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is "true": it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed.'[2] With

primitive peoples the tale both reflects the accepted world-view and serves to keep that view alive. The gap between the modern world-view and that of the peasant of even nineteenth-century Ireland is probably greater than that between the peasant and the pagan Celt. But modern man's awareness of the gap as unfortunate has begun to cause him to be more receptive to earlier ways of understanding his relation to the unseen world.

In some medical circles doctors have recently begun to become aware of the healing potential of positive images. Similarly, part of the value of certain wonder tales can be seen to lie in their engagement with conflicts set in an optimistic framework. As Bruno Bettelheim puts it, 'In traditional Hindu medicine a fairy tale giving form to his particular problem was offered to a psychically disoriented person, for his meditation. It was expected that through contemplating the story the disturbed person would be led to visualize both the nature of the impasse in living from which he suffered, and the possibility of its resolution.' Bettelheim sees this process as 'therapeutic because the patient finds his *own* solutions, through contemplating what the story seems to imply about him and his inner conflicts at this moment in his life' (*Uses of Enchantment* 25). Such use can also be applied to physical disease, as Max Lüthi notes in *Once upon a Time*: 'We can readily believe the report of a North German storyteller that a soothing and healing power can emanate from fairy tales when told to sick people in hospitals' (57). Obviously such use offers the patient a sublimated pattern which encourages integration.

One of the reasons that wonder tales deal so often with transformation is that, in Bettelheim's words, 'they concentrate on the process of change, rather than describing the exact details of the bliss eventually to be gained' (*Uses of Enchantment* 73). The suspicion of some adults that that 'bliss' may be escapist is rebutted by Bettelheim. He points out that the fairy tale does describe violent actions and represents most of the inner conflicts that haunt us. 'For those who immerse themselves in what the fairy tale has to communicate, it becomes a deep, quiet pool which at first seems to reflect only our own image; but behind it we soon discover the inner turmoils of our soul – its depth, and ways to gain peace within ourselves and with the world, which is the reward of our struggles' (309). This simple but profound conclusion implies what Max Lüthi asserts, first that the fairy tale 'sublimates reality ... empties the motifs and removes

them from reality'; second, that such sublimation is 'not only a loss, but a gain ... Things which are, in reality, weighty and difficult become light and transparent. Not only do feelings become light and volatile; not only do crime and justice playfully take their places in this stylized world; the erotic, the divine, the magical are also not present in their original form' (*Once upon a Time* 93). Primitive belief in what we call superstitions is presumably made easier to bear as magic in an optimistic fiction.

Lüthi's point suggests an important way in which the reaction of a modern reader of a wonder tale differs from that of a pagan Celt. The Celt's beliefs compelled him to certain actions and avoidances because he experienced a kind of give and take with the supernatural that we do not. Yet we are also bound by subtle and detrimental beliefs (from childhood conditioning, say), which, unlike the Celt, we have no publicly acceptable means of coming to grips with. Even today wonder tales can work at the same unconscious level on which such beliefs exist.

In *The European Folktale* Lüthi shows what the wonder tale offers that everyday experience does not. Whereas 'in the real world we see only partial development and well-nigh incomprehensible fates,' the wonder tale 'presents us with a world ... in which each element has its exactly designated place ... All that takes place ... is so clearly depicted and so much in harmony with itself ... that the portrayal fills one with blissful assurance' (84–5). Because the wonder tale acts 'as a truly poetic work, ... it demands faith in the inner truth of what it relates' (92). Although it refuses 'to arrange or systematize its characters and events into some comprehensive scheme,' it yet gives the reader assurance: 'even if you do not know what forces are influencing you and how they are doing so, even if you do not know what kind of relations you are embedded in, you may rest assured that you *do* stand in the midst of meaningful relationships' (93). Bruno Bettelheim takes an even more positive view: 'While the fantasy is *unreal*, the good feelings it gives us about ourselves and our future *are real*, and these real good feelings are what we need to sustain us' (*Uses of Enchantment* 126). These good feelings have the strength that comes not from mental escape but from confronting, in sublimated form, the conflicts and difficulties that are the human lot.

The wonder tale we now turn to illustrates this concern with healing and wholeness, with facing internal problems in a sublimated form in order to re-establish a lost harmony.

THE COTTER'S SON AND THE HALF SLIM CHAMPION

A COTTER and his wife had three sons. After the father died, the first son stayed at home for a year and then left to find his fortune. After another year the second son left also. At the end of the third year the mother died; then the youngest son, Arthur,was also free to leave. Looking for a master, he 'took service with a hill.' On the last day of service he was approached by the Half Slim Champion with a proposal to play cards for a wager. Arthur agreed and won the game. He asked for lands, a castle, and wealth, which were given him. After another year the champion again appeared, and Arthur won a second time, claiming as his wife a beautiful lady the champion had brought. After a third year the champion brought a hound, which Arthur also won. When the fourth year had passed, Arthur's wife warned him not to play with the champion again, but he did, and lost. The champion put him 'under bonds' to find 'the birth that has never been born, and that never will be' (*Hero-Tales* 358).

Thus began Arthur's real adventures in the world. His wife advised him to go with the hound and take service with the King of Lochlin. He took her advice, and one day nearing a castle, the hound 'grew so wild with delight that he broke his chain, and rushed away' (359). Arthur followed him and because of the hound was welcomed by the son of the King of Lochlin. (The hound, it is later explained, had been stolen from the castle by the champion.) Taking service with the king's son, Arthur was asked to bring in faggots from the forest. He discovered that one half of it was green, the other half dry. The king's son explained that a terrible serpent had come and taken over half the forest and 'knocked the life out of' the half she left to him (360). Despite the warning of the king's son, Arthur went off to take the wood from the green half.

When he began cutting at the largest tree, the serpent appeared and asked him why he was cutting her timber. Replying that he wanted to build her a house, Arthur tricked her into putting her tail into a cleft he had made in the tree. Then he knocked out the wedges he had put in and vexed the serpent until she uprooted the tree that held her prisoner. Next he cut down a large number of dry trees, piled them on the serpent and forced her to carry them to the castle. Seeing him coming, the inhabitants of the castle left, but returned when he killed the serpent.

The king's son then confessed to Arthur that his wife had been stolen by a giant with five heads. Arthur set off to find her, again despite the warning of the king's son. Arriving at the giant's castle, Arthur had only just time to be warned that the giant was returning. After a fight that lasted all day, Arthur finally defeated the giant by cutting off all five heads at once. The wife of the king's son then ran out and 'smothered Arthur with kisses' (365). She said it was a shame to leave all the giant's gold behind; Arthur filled three ships with it, and they sailed back to Lochlin. The king's son had lain on the hearth all the time Arthur was gone. 'When the wife came in, and put her hand on his hand, he rose up, and shook seven tons of ashes from himself, with seven barrels of rust' (366).

The king's son asked Arthur what payment he would take for his service. Arthur replied that he needed to know the answer to the champion's riddle. The king's son responded that that was not difficult and then did an amazing thing. He went to 'a hollow place in the wall of the castle' and opened a secret door to reveal his father, the king, whom he kept and fed there. He asked the old man to tell him 'who is it that has never been born, and never will be' (366). When the old man refused to tell, his son put him on a red-hot iron griddle. 'It's fried and roasted you'll be till you answer my question.' But the old king refused until 'the marrow was melting in the bones to his knees' (367). Then he told the following tale.

He once discovered a rod of enchantment, which he then always kept with him. But one day he forgot it, and when he hurried back to the castle for it, he discovered his wife in their bed chamber with a dark tall man. Hoping he had not been seen, he slipped out again. But when he next went in, his wife struck him with the rod and transformed him into a deer. She then set the hounds on him. He escaped and returned to destroy her crops. Finally she managed to tap him again with the rod, this time turning him into a wolf. Again chased by hounds and by men, the wolf swam to an island on a lake. There he found a she-wolf, a transformed woman who was supposed to have given birth to a hero years before but could not give birth as a wolf. There was no food on the island and both wolves were starving. One night, dreaming of a kid, the king-wolf snapped and tore open the side of the she-wolf. An infant came out and 'grew to the size of a man in one moment. "That man [said the old king] is the birth that has never been born, and never will be; that man is the Half Slim Champion"' (369).

Because the king-wolf had killed the mother-wolf by the same accident that freed the child, the champion attacked the wolf, which had to plunge in the lake but managed to swim back to land. Still pursued by the champion, the king surprised his wife, who in her fear struck him again with the rod. Transformed back to a man, the king snatched the rod and turned his own wife into a wolf and the dark tall man into a sheep as punishment. But the champion chased him into his castle, where he hid in the secret 'hollow place near the chimney' (371). Unable to find the king, the champion stole his favourite hound and his daughter, whom he subsequently gave to Arthur. The king advised Arthur to go tell the champion that the answer to the riddle lay behind his own ear, which had had a piece nicked off by the wolf's teeth as the champion was born.

Arthur returned and did as directed. The two fought and Arthur won, taking the champion's head back to the castle of the King of Lochlin. When he threw it down, with the announcement of his victory, the old king 'burst out the wall, and went through the end of the castle, so great was his joy. As soon as he was in the open air, free from confinement and dread, he became the best man in Lochlin' (372). Arthur sailed back to his wife in Erin with the three ships of giant's gold as a parting present from the king, his father-in-law.

THE MOST STRIKING and original part of this tale occurs after Arthur reaches the castle of the King of Lochlin. A wasteland motif is introduced there by two unconnected circumstances: the dry wood devastated by a serpent and the old king who is shut up in a wall. That there is something deeply wrong with the kingdom is indicated by its having as ruler a man who is always referred to as 'the son of the King of Lochlin' and by that son's lack of power. He can do nothing either about the serpent which devastates and usurps his land or about the kidnapping of his wife. He tries to dissuade Arthur from undertaking to correct both wrongs; he also flees when Arthur returns with the serpent and stays in the ashes while Arthur is off rescuing his wife.

The motif of a human or a cat in the ashes is common enough in folk tales. When it is a cat, aggression is involved.[3] The human will more usually be Cinderella or the Ash Lad.[4] McManus retells a story titled 'Jack the Ashypet' about a lad who never takes his toes out of the ashes until he is fully grown. He then goes off to make his fortune by trickery. At the

point when he decides to go into the world, he makes clear the meaning of his having stayed in the ashes: it was a way of refusing to do his part, to grow up (*Well* 49–50).

Further implications of this motif are even clearer in various North American Indian tales, where the cultural mores allow a more direct expression of the symbolic implications. In one tale, a youth who finally becomes a hero begins as the youngest of four sons, the lazy one, ridiculed by his more active and successful brothers as the 'dirty brother' because he 'always slept in the ashes beside the fire.' When the brothers undertake the north-west–coast purifying regime to enable them to become successful hunters, they are even more scornful of their brother, who continues to 'lie in the ashes and filth, to the shame and disgust of his father and the rest of the household.' The 'eldest brother was most sarcastic. He would say, "He likes the odour of his own urine and excrement."'[5] The connection of dirt and filth and excrement with shame, refusal to conform to social expectation, and childish ineffectuality clearly parallels that of Jack Ashypet and the son. It further corresponds to the anal phase in Freud's developmental scheme.

The king's son is in a more difficult situation because he has moved beyond even delayed childhood into adulthood, marriage, and rulership. But despite serving as ruler, he is not king. He must in fact suffer from the defect or difficulty of his father's inadequacy, the shame of hiding in a wall from a champion who, in frustration at not finding his vendetta foe, steals the king's daughter. The question remains why the son, who has a double motive, cannot follow the champion and kill him, thus rescuing his sister and freeing his father with the one deed. As we saw in 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island,' there are stories in which a king's son saves the kingdom from his father's enemy. Where he is unable, we are warranted in trying to find out why. But the place to begin is with a closer look at the defects of the king.

Why, when he has gained a magic rod, should the king discover that his wife is betraying him with a dark stranger? To ask the question in this way is almost to answer it: the dark stranger is giving her what the king, in his preoccupation with the magic rod, does not. He pays for his disregard of the physical world, presumably including an unsatisfied wife, by being turned into a creature himself. Bettelheim suggests that civilization brings about a split between the animal and the human and that animal trans-

formation is part of many fairy tales because they are trying to heal the split (*Uses of Enchantment* 78, 290–1, 308–9). This insight parallels Douglas's concern with dirt, taboo, and at-one-ment. Both have important implications for the plight of the king in this wonder tale.

The destructiveness of the king in wolf form is a good sign of his anger at the queen, as indicated by his destroying her crops. He also kills the female wolf, which we might call the queen's surrogate, since he later turns the queen into a wolf. (Either wolf can stand for the queen as the mere animal he would see her as having become through her adultery with the dark man.) But substitutes won't do. The result of the king's attempts at a solution is a continuation of the fugitive life of harrassment which he has known since his transformation. Being turned back into a man does not release him from his difficulties. His decision to transform his wife into a grey wolf and her lover into a sheep 'in hopes that the gray wolf might eat him' (*Hero-Tales* 370) is laudable as an attempt at poetic justice, but neither sure nor direct. In other Irish tales the king in such circumstances often confronts the queen and is either reunited with her or kills her. The King of Lochlin is also unable to contemplate fighting or transforming the champion who still pursues him. And his ineffectuality appears to be passed on to his son.

The turning point for the son seems to come when his wife returns and puts her hand on his to pull him out of the ashes. Immediately after this rescue and symbolic discarding of regression and shame, the son brings out his father and tortures him. This shocking act is handled in the usual impersonal style of these tales; we are not invited to sympathize with the old man or condemn the son. The king's public admission of his shame is probably therapeutic, for at the end he is able to give Arthur a properly mysterious and pointed reply to the riddle. His potency is returning, as becomes more evident after Arthur brings the head of his foe, when he bursts out through the wall (instead of using the secret door) and is rejuvenated.

The son and father make a kind of composite Fisher King in a variation of the medieval Grail legend.[6] As characterized by Jessie Weston, the tale of the Fisher King

> ... postulates a close connection between the vitality of a certain King, and the prosperity of his kingdom; the forces of the ruler being weakened or destroyed,

by wound, sickness, old age, or death, the land becomes Waste, and the task of the hero is that of restoration.[7]

A more recent scholar, Roger Loomis, supports this part of Weston's study in words which allow us to see why this wonder tale might be based on a pattern similar to these medieval tales: 'The romances themselves, therefore, amply support the Weston thesis that in the traditions of the Maimed King and the Waste Land is embodied a heathenish belief that the reproductive forces of nature were affected by, even depended on, the sexual potency of the ruler.'[8] In chapter one, we saw this same pagan belief permeating the ancient Irish manuscripts and the wonder tale of 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island.' In that tale the king produces his own restoring hero, through his liaison with the enchanted queen. Although he is not otherwise very effective, he is certainly not presented as maimed.

The situation of the King of Lochlin is, of course, quite different. He is described as old; he is hidden away from contact with the world; and he is actively maimed by his own son. The son himself is another such figure, unable to rescue his wife or stand up to the serpent which has made a dry wasteland of half his land. As we have seen, both father and son seem impotent in relation to their wives, both of whom are appropriated by other men. The son's wife and thus his ability to act are restored by Arthur, who, in his culminating deed of heroism, rejuvenates the old king by freeing him from his fear.

In both the Grail romances and this wonder tale, the hero meets the impotent king under mysterious circumstances. In the romances, the objects that could lead to a healing of the maimed king are often silently brought before the hero, but he usually fails to respond to them because he has earlier been prohibited from asking about them. As a wonder-tale hero, Arthur, of course, succeeds, I would say because the question he must answer is put as a demand to the old king by a son to whom Arthur has restored wife and land.

Our investigation has so far tended to focus on the king and his son. But the story began with Arthur. The text says that the first two sons left with their mother's blessing. Because she died before Arthur left, he did not receive it. This omission would not be remarkable if it did not reverse a very common beginning in Irish oral tales, one that we have already seen in 'The Daughter of the King of Greece' (chapter six). The usual pattern

is for the mother to offer the two older sons a choice between a large cake and a small one. Both choose the large one, although the mother has specified that only the smaller has her blessing on it. When the youngest leaves, he chooses the smaller, and this act is the first indication of his worthiness to succeed. I would suggest that Arthur's starting on his adventures without his mother's blessing indicates a problem. Although he gains a wife easily enough, he does get into trouble by refusing to take her advice. And his first adversary is a female serpent. He tricks, uses, and then kills her. Is this victory a sign of his prowess or of his problem? Both, I would argue.

As we have already noticed, the hero of a wonder tale must display some desirable human trait to ensure the proper resolution of his problem. If he does not, he will have unusual difficulty in passing later tests (as Jack does in 'The Blue Scarf'), or his seeming triumph at the end of the tale will appear unstable (as with the fisherman's son in the Gruagach tale). Arthur has in fact demonstrated the desirable trait of modesty in asking merely to take service under the king's son. Earlier, his enigmatic taking 'service with a hill' has entitled him to meet with the champion, a figure of destiny who sends him on to the subsequent adventures.

The two services he renders the king's son are to destroy the devastating female and rescue the liberating one. In doing it for the son, I would argue, he also does it for himself. It is as though he cannot be free to settle down with his wife until he has corrected this imbalance in the kingdom. Besides overcoming female devastation and freeing female succour, he must also come to terms with male destructiveness. His first four encounters with the champion are not decisive, as his subsequent adventures demonstrate. But the result of the fourth encounter, the riddle-quest on which the champion sends Arthur, does provide the basis for a decisive conflict. Arthur's answer puts him on an equal footing with the champion and allows him to act as an heroic Celt should – to carry back the head as a sign of victory and as a way of convincing the king that his nemesis is dead.

It does not surprise us to note that the Half Slim Champion sets in motion the wheels of his own fate.[9] After all, he himself brings the king's daughter to his opponent and proposes her as the stake of the second game. By marrying into the family, Arthur would be bound to support it, which he does formally (if unknowingly) when his wife's dog leads him to her brother to take service.

This seeming blunder by the champion may be viewed in two ways. It may be seen as a deep strategy. The champion is not sure that the king is still alive. If he is dead, the champion is free of his vendetta. If he is alive, the champion needs to know where he can be found. He therefore wants the daughter to send Arthur to the king's castle. Since only a hero as helpful as Arthur could have caused the son to bring the old king out of hiding, the champion's plan has that much likelihood of success. What he has presumably not calculated well enough is the result of the process I have tried to sketch, Arthur's gain in heroic power as a result of the quest to rescue the son's wife, his discovery that he is well able to deal death to a powerful male.

On the other hand, we may look at the champion in quite another way. Frustrated from birth, born in violence, he has felt obliged to take revenge for an action about which he must feel ambivalent. According to the terms of his mother's transformation, he could not be born at all. His entering life was thus possible only at the cost of his mother's leaving it. The tension in him is indicated by his testing to see if the old king is still alive: this act can be seen as betraying his secret desire that the king might be dead and his own conflict resolved. We shall investigate this point further presently.

This wonder tale contains two stories. While the one that involves Arthur, the hero, has interesting adventures, the king's inset story brings in more complex problems. Arthur becomes involved in a situation that includes more than one generation, that has antecedents going back in time. The forces at work are the relations of parents to one another, especially on a sexual level, the halting and distorting of natural processes (the king's transformation and the champion's birth), and the paralysis and aridity that hate and fear impart to individuals and kingdoms (the deadliness of the champion and the withdrawal and impotence of the king and his son). Out of this turmoil and pain we witness the metamorphosis that even fear, shame, and hate can undergo, liberating positive energies that finally undermine the cold grip of those negative passions on life. When the son and Arthur use aggression against the king and the champion (the sources of those anti-life feelings), the unblocking of energy that follows is beautifully imaged in the rejuvenated old king's breaking out of the castle wall into nature.

This way of seeing the resolution of the conflict harmonizes with the emphasis Lüthi and Bettelheim put on the curative power of good feelings. If we picture the tale read to someone in a hospital, we can imagine

the fear and shame which paralyse the king and his son acting as surrogates for the patient's incapacitated will and mind. The hero then becomes an image of spirit, on a physical level doing away with the serpent that lays waste the land, then on an emotional level helping the son to become activated and express his feelings, then penetrating to the fear of death which has made the king impotent. The tale does not lecture the patient ('It's all in your mind' or 'You should get better'). Rather, it offers an interesting story to engage his mind, a conflict to resonate with his own, and a positive outcome to suggest that such healing is possible.

On a more everyday level, any person hearing the tale is reassured; like the hero, he need not fear that lack of a mother's blessing will imperil his journey through life. Equally important, he is shown that overachievement does not in itself bring relief from the feeling of void which may motivate him. Failure to win may simply be the beginning of a quest which will get to the root of the problem. As imaged in the king and his son, that problem appears to be feelings of fear and inadequacy which can be overcome by positive help (the return of the wife) and by confronting the deadly face which is the source of that fear.

The clarity of narrative conflict which seems to separate protagonist (Arthur) from antagonist (the champion), victim (the king) from persecutor (the champion), dissolves upon closer inspection. The forces are intimately linked: the victim gave the persecutor life; the antagonist helped the protagonist to defeat him. These forces are also part of one process which aims at resolution, unity, wholeness.

If one character seems finally to function as a scapegoat, we must remember that the champion defines himself when he presents the hero with the riddle which needs an answer, a solution, a resolution: the hero must search until he finds 'the birth that has never been born and that never will be.' Somewhat like Macbeth, who enters combat secure in the knowledge that he cannot be vanquished except by man not of woman born, the champion sets in motion his own doom in presenting this challenge to the hero. The champion was not intended to be born, could only be born of woman, was not born of woman, and once he escaped the womb of the wolf had missed his chance to be born. The implications of this conundrum require a fresh look at the champion before we come back to the question of wholeness in the tale.

As the Rees brothers argue, a Caesarian birth has traditionally been viewed as an event that connects the natural and the supernatural. In this tale, the fact that the champion is ripped from his mother's womb means

that he does not take the natural route into life. Trapped between being and non-being, he is liberated by an unnatural act: in a dream his surrogate father both kills his mother and gives him life with the one act of aggression. Thus 'the impossible becomes possible' (*Celtic Heritage* 237). As a man not born of woman, he is an anomaly of the sort the Rees brothers were concerned with. The champion 'defies classification, and is therefore free from the limitations that are inherent in a definition' (345). Like other heroes who have penetrated the dividing line between natural and supernatural, he is thereby freed to choose his own nature. But how are we to reconcile this optimistic assertion with the narrow fixedness of his life?

I suggested earlier that the champion acts as though bound by vendetta, that fateful code which makes justice a personal responsibility. Another way of understanding his career is to see him responding as a wolf would when a pack member is attacked by an interloper. If it is then objected that he is born human, we must remember that he grows to manhood on the spot, without benefit of acculturation. I believe the hidden dynamic of the tale is his attempt to free himself from the dilemmas which existence has thrust on him: If my mother had a wolf's form and I have a man's, what kind of creature am I? If the first sight I saw when born was the creature who made possible my birth and killed my mother, what is my duty? If I as a man choose to kill him as a wolf, is my duty altered when he becomes a man? Although the champion's answers to these questions seem clear from certain of his actions, I have already suggested that the final pattern of his initiatives betrays an ambivalence.

That ambivalence is most evident in the phrasing of the riddle-quest he set the hero. If the champion is 'the birth that has never been born and never will be,' he is saying literally that he was never born. If he thus does not exist, he can best resolve his problem by causing his own destruction. He initiates this process by choosing a hero who, like him, set out in life without a mother's blessing. He gives that hero what he had presumably reserved for himself, a wife and hound. He does this in such a way that the giving becomes a process of restitution. First the dog is returned to its original owners. Then the wife is restored, if not to her family at least to the person they would have chosen for her. Last, the king will be presented with the head of the creature that attempted to punish him. This act rejuvenates the king, makes him again a fit ruler of the land, restores harmony to his kingdom.

Originally the king brought the disharmony on himself, either through his choice of a queen or by his conduct towards her, and then in his involuntary killing of the wolf. That act precipitates an unnatural occurrence, the entry into the king's world of one who was not intended to appear. This anomaly seems to be a direct consequence of the king's fascination with metamorphosis: the rod causes the king's transformation, which in turn precipitates the birth of his nemesis.

It is therefore worth noting that transformation plays no part in the experience of either the king's son or of the hero. Arthur's victories are generally the result of straightforward physical prowess. As in 'Baranoir' and 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island,' in this tale harmony or wholeness is restored when the effects of magic are finally nullified. When the anomaly created by the mind of the king is eradicated, he is able to perceive the world as it is, a place where physical death is inevitable but where the spirit has good reason to muster vitality and optimism in its dealings with others.

12 Destiny and Fate

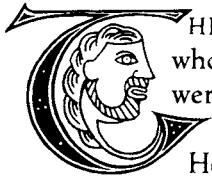
THE BEST wonder tales not only possess a close-knit texture of plot and character but also connect those elements with a theme of psychic and spiritual depth. This connection is frequently made as a revelation in a key scene. Such scenes may be called the point of intensity in the tale, the point where difficulties or possibilities come into focus and that which was hidden is revealed. Such a revelation is always both dramatic and thematically compelling.

At the most basic level, wonder tales offer a simple surface that is easily pictured. Because their characters usually confront one another, they tend to dramatize rather than rhapsodize or philosophize. It has been the burden of my route through them to indicate that they are not concerned with mere escapist adventures but have profound human meaning. Drawing the discussions of these separate narrative qualities together will demonstrate again in summary form how the tales are at their most vivid and dramatic at those points where they are also most meaningful.

To appreciate how image, drama, and meaning tend to coalesce in important scenes, I shall for the next several pages be discriminating among such scenes as focal points in each story. This exploration will require us to consider more closely the connection between the riddle and the wonder tale. This connection will in turn lead to the important themes of binding and imprisonment. Finally we shall turn again to the workings of fate and to the paradox that, while all is determined in a wonder tale, the hero is perfectly free.

To provide a concrete basis for this investigation, I shall discuss part of a wonder tale we have already considered, 'The Speckled Bull.' The episode we shall be concerned with occurs after the king's son, in bull form, has been warned that his aunt is going to have him killed; he escapes to another kingdom.

THE SPECKLED BULL



HE KING of the eastern world had a very beautiful daughter, who was under *geasa* never to leave the palace unless her eyes were covered. If she removed the veil from her eyes, she had to marry the first man she saw' (*Folktales of Ireland* 123). Her father took great care to keep her eyes veiled so she would not have to wed someone of low birth. When news of the arrival of the speckled bull reached the king, he determined to go look at it and to take his daughter. He ordered his subjects to leave the area, then led her to the field where the bull was.

As soon as the king removed her veil, his daughter took one look at the bull and fainted. When she recovered her senses, she upbraided her father for bringing her to gaze on a man even though he was a king's son. He could not understand her until he put his hand on her shoulder. Then he also saw a handsome young man; however, 'no sooner had he removed his hand from his daughter's shoulder than he saw the huge wild speckled bull once more' (124). But the king had already decided he wanted his daughter to marry the king's son. They approached the bull, and with his hand on his daughter's shoulder the king asked if the young man would marry her.

The king's son said he was willing, despite his enchantment. The king was optimistic: 'It may not be long more until you are free from your *geasa*. My daughter here was also under *geasa* and now she is free from them. She has met a king's son who has promised to marry her' (124–5). They were married, and the king's son, though a bull by day, became a man by night. The king asked his Druid how to lift his son-in-law's gessa. The Druid said that the bull should start fighting the other cattle in the field. When he did, his left horn would break off, and the king must get it. Inside would be a small drop of liquid which would restore the bull to human form if it could be thrown between his eyes.

This last requirement was in fact a difficult one. As the son-in-law warned the king, during the fight 'you must be very careful not to come too close to me ... I have only my animal sense when I'm a bull, and I might kill you' (126). The king determined to try and was able to get the horn with the drop. But the bull charged him and would have killed him if he had not thrown the drop on the right spot. The bull was immediately disenchanted. Then the son-in-law and his wife went back to Ireland, where he was revenged on his cruel aunt. He also disenchanted a green

stone back into his mother and took her to the Eastern world, where he was crowned the king and his wife queen by his father-in-law.

THERE ARE four scenes in this narrative in which what was hidden is revealed; we need to discriminate among them. Two of these scenes contain elements which I have defined as crucial in determining the effectiveness of such focal points: they are pictorially vivid, have dramatic intensity, and are thematically important. The scene in which the father places his hand on his daughter's shoulder has all three. The daughter's reaction is dramatic, as is her method of convincing her father. The scene is also visually striking, as the king's vision moves from bull to man and back again. Finally, it is thematically important: the amazing ability of the king's daughter to see through the bull's shape to the man's nature within it is obviously related to the gessa or bond she is under. She is saved by her curse.

The scene in which the king disenchants his future son-in-law also has three elements. The thematic result is that the hero who could share his wife's bed as a man only by night is now free to challenge his aunt by day. The scene is dramatic in the tension of man against beast, and pictorial in its easily visualized activity. In the first scene the transformed hero is perceived, appreciated, and thus half-liberated by the princess and her father; in the second he is fully freed by the king. These scenes have intensity and provide a focal point of plot and theme.

In the two less important scenes that follow these, what was hidden is also revealed, but less effectively. Returned to Ireland, the hero exposes his aunt and disenchants his mother. The first is thematically meaningful and we could say dramatic, but it does not have a powerful visual element because there is no physical change to correlate with the exposure of the aunt's true nature. In contrast, the disenchantment of the mother is quite pictorial, but with no dramatic impact and only perfunctory meaning. Although these two exposures resolve earlier difficulties or disparities in the action, they do not contain the vibrant central revelations and energetic liberations that the earlier two incidents do.

The name I shall give to the tale's point of revelation with its three elements is *crux*. I use the term in both of its common senses, as 'a tormenting or baffling problem' (referring to the physical suffering of the crucifixion) or 'a pivotal, fundamental or vital point' (referring to the religious meaning of crucifixion).[1] The word can thus be correlated with

the cross as religious symbol, the place where there is an intersection of horizontal and vertical, physical and spiritual, death and life, this world and the other. Where the two arms come together is a point of tension and decision, of revelation. Each of the wonder tales we have studied has at least one crux in it, a point at which the line of this world is intersected by that of the other, an instant in which what was hidden is revealed in a pictorial, dramatic, and meaningful manner.

One obvious form such a crux will take is the sacrifice. The clearest example occurs in 'The Haggary Nag.' Despite Cathal's refusal to kill it, the nag manages to die, and Cathal then carries out his part in the scenario his faithful helper outlined. The dramatic part of this revelation is pronounced: Cathal's role is to creep inside the nag's body, to lure the ravens down with an appropriately staged scene, and finally to reveal the unreality of the play by killing the ravens. Then, with the three drops of their heart's blood, he brings the nag back to life. The revelation that death is not to be feared will become the central theme of the tale, as is born out in another crux, Cathal's plunge on to the soldier's spears near the end.

The earliest crux in the tale is Cathal's first sight of the great castle at the Hill of the World's End. Cathal has been prepared for a princess who kills all men who reach the castle, but he has not been told that he will face 365 windows, each made brighter than the sun by the princess's combing her hair. Although this revelation is consonant with the light emanating from the one hair he found earlier, it raises that light to a cosmic level and asserts the awe-inspiring desirability of its dangerous source. As we discussed in chapter ten, this crux is beautifully balanced against the one in which Cathal masters the darkness of the ravens.

In 'The Daughter of the King of Greece' we saw a crux that encompasses the light-dark images of both the above scenes in a more compact, less intense revelation. Three black crows appear as the king's son is about to be executed. They land and turn into three women, one of whom takes off her stocking; light floods out from her foot. The women turn back into crows and fly away, but the shining foot is the evidence needed to free the king's son. He can begin the last stage of his quest for the hand of the princess who saved him. This reversal of three crows, with their deathly association, into three women and a flood of light is effective drama. Like Cathal, the hero dares death and is rewarded with light, freedom, hope renewed.

Another crux which involves light is the public elevation of the reluctant prince at the end of 'The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island.' When he mounts the grey horse of the Queen of Tubber Tintye, we expect that he will not be thrown and killed, as his false half-brothers were, but we are not prepared for the horse's rising into the sky, nor for the prince's standing on its back and swinging his sword as he goes up under the sun. The flashing out of this scene is particularly satisfying, since the hero has been denied public acknowledgment of his two earlier victories in battle as well as of his success in the quest for water from the Flaming Well. His elevation makes beautifully manifest what had previously been hidden.

Yet such pictorial revelation cannot always be taken at face value, as we saw in 'The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks.' Rather than being given a place in the sun in the process of successfully passing a crucial test, the fisherman's son manipulates himself into a handsome form. Again unlike the prince, his appearance in human form is no revelation to the reader, though it is to the king and his daughter, who have seen him only in an enchanted form before. In the four tales we have just considered, the crux comes as a surprise to the reader too.

We have seen that the process which leads to the conclusion of the Gruagach tale does not provide the kind of firm base that it does in the prince's relations with the Queen of Tubber Tintye. The hero in both tales does brave deeds for which he is given public recognition at the end. But the prince has done his deeds for others and has earlier been denied recognition. He has also been content to possess the actuality rather than the appearance of heroism. In contrast, the fisherman's son has had to flee his opponents until he can kill them by trickery, and his whole concern is with appearance, an understandable consequence of his ability to transform himself.

Appearance and reality are equally at issue in 'The Fisherman of Kinsale and the Hag of the Sea.' In winning a bride early in the tale, Sean has not had his heroic appearance sufficiently tested. He is therefore subsequently involved in two important cruxes. The first easily meets the three criteria we have been using. When a beautiful woman appears at the wedding, turns into a hag, and springs into the tallest tree, we have a visually arresting scene. When she springs down and carries off the hero-groom, we have high drama. And when we learn that she has waited until

the last possible day – which also happens to be Sean's wedding day –before coming to enforce her claim on the hero, we are faced with a thematically important coincidence.

The other crux in this tale lacks visual emphasis; it puts more weight on what is said than on what is seen. Sean alone on the shore is approached by his father-in-law and reproached for the abduction of his daughter. Although nothing is revealed pictorially, this scene is thematically crucial, as all Sean's appearances are stripped away by the bride's angry father. Because of this dramatic scene Sean will not be able to resolve his dilemma simply by killing his supernatural enemy and its offspring, as the fisherman's son was able to do. Sean must not only rescue his wife but face the question of what he actually is behind the appearances that his transforming ability makes so readily available to him. As we have seen, he decides that he is both a hero and a fisherman's son. This admirable decision brings him not only inner stability but social acceptance.

Surface drama is normally the accepted vehicle of wonder tales. In the different adventures of the two fishermen's sons that convention is called in question, implicitly in the Gruagach tale, almost explicitly in Sean's. It is therefore fitting that a thematic and dramatic crux – Sean's moment of truth – should lack the visual element. It is also appropriate that words of realism should puncture the hero's usual façade. Other heroes are scorned, but usually unfairly. Sean's triumph is thus all the more impressive.

At this point I feel the need to interrupt my exposition of the crux to connect it with two themes that have been important in this study of the wonder tale: the integration of the hero and the violence of the plot. While all the wonder tales we have looked at are concerned with integration, not all heroes achieve it at the same level. Focusing on the conflict, we have been able to see three different levels in three of the tales just considered. The king's son and the daughter of the King of Greece work out a stable relation on an emotional level. Sean adds to the emotional, integration at the social level. The son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island allows others to work through emotional problems and himself achieves integration at a spiritual level, elevated and bathed in light. In general, heroes who use violence do not reach spiritual integration, while those who are not assertive or violent do reach it.[2] The hero's ability to assume animal shape leads to violence in both tales about fishermen's

sons. We may therefore add that evidence to the observation quoted in chapter two that metamorphosis draws the shape-shifter towards the alien and away from the search for identity.

'The Blue Scarf' provides support for the contention that the use of violence makes less likely the hero's spiritual advancement. Although there are cruxes within this tale, the compelling final scene is less intense than the earlier one in which Jack had his sight restored. He has learned the importance of common humanity in being rescued by the servant and his wife, but he must end the tale by killing the giant. His then giving his belt temporarily to his wife and offering half the kingdom to the servant demonstrate how much humanity he has learned but do not raise him to that high level we saw attained by the son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island.

The paradoxical importance of violence in wonder tales can be best indicated by connecting it with the crossing of thresholds, a topic raised in the introduction to part two. In 'The Cotter's Son and the Half Slim Champion,' the King of Lochlin hides in a secret chamber out of fear of violent death. He is first taken out to be tortured by his son. He finally leaves the chamber in a burst of power that emphasizes his imperviousness to harm. Violence is equally present in cases where characters cross the boundary from supernatural to natural, from an enchanted form to an original one. Although the king's becoming a wolf entails no violence, the breaking of the enchantment does: pursued by the vengeful champion, he hopes to escape death by becoming human again. Even more to my point, the champion's own transition from unnatural imprisonment in the womb of his enchanted wolf-mother to human form and life outside is also achieved only by the violation of the mother's womb, the extinguishing of her life.

Violence is also a noticeable feature of the transformation incidents in 'Sgiathan Dearg.' The son's stabbing a raven and sprinkling its blood on to two others enables all three to cross the boundary back to human form. Similarly, in 'The Haggary Nag' Cathal's killing the ravens, although not connected with transformation, is very much associated with boundaries. The incident in fact forces Cathal to cross an important threshold. First, he puts his dagger in the ground so the nag can fall on it. Then he disembowels his helper with it. Finally he uses it to pierce the heart of all three ravens. The threshold he crosses is death, rendered through the corpse of the nag, which he enters to hide from the ravens. From this

secret chamber (or womb) he bursts out to secure the blood of life. His last encounter with a pointed weapon comes when he casts himself on the swords of the king's troop. But his life is of course saved by the ravens' blood, as were the nag's and the princess's. Only the nag actually crosses the boundary between life and death, but Cathal twice dares it.

The same boundary is dared by both Baranoir and the daughter of King Under the Wave when each must enter the poison cauldron. Another character in the same tale is impervious to the dangers of that boundary because he has already experienced death. Only Gansaol can survive being scalded by the poisonous water of the Well of Fate which guards the life-giving Well of Fortune. This situation may be taken as a paradigm of the connection between violence and boundaries. Whether phrased in Christian, existential, or archetypal terms, the relation is paradoxical: he who would save his life must lose it; the denial of death is the refusal of a full life; lasting light can be found only by plumbing the darkness. In Jungian terms, by befriending Gansaol as the shadow of death Baranoir ensures his own imperviousness to the threat of death and prepares his mind to encounter that centre whence flow both life and death. In Shelley's formulation, 'the secret alchemy' of the spirit 'turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death into life.'

The other Grateful Dead tale, 'The King of Greece's Daughter,' fits the same formulation but with different dynamics. Whereas Baranoir faces only the king's daughter, Fionan must work through her benign father and contend with the father's malign counterpart, the King of Darkness. That other-world king is the dark centre of energy in Fionan's experience. From him flows the death which has interrupted a proper union in this world. To him flows the life of the princess. He has even set up his own multiplied symbols of unity in the rings which she must keep giving him. By going to meet this death-dealer, Fionan is able to bring out not only the rings but the severed head of the usurper. 'At breakfast next morning, when the King of Greece came down, the King of Darkness's head was sitting on the table before him.' Even without the taboo overtones of cannibalism, this scene is obviously the crux in the tale. In its grisly way it is both pictorial and dramatic. It is also thematically significant, not only bringing the power of the unconscious into this world but facing the king with his alter ego, that part of him which does not want to give up his daughter. Both king and princess are freed by this act, which assures the stability of the union that follows.

It is difficult to pinpoint a crux in 'Baranoir, Son of a King in Erin.' I would prefer to suggest that the whole scene in which Baranoir enters the marriage contest with the daughter of King Under the Wave functions as one. The cauldron and sword incidents are pictorial, but the riddle scene much less so. In fact, I would see the riddle as introducing a different form of the crux in which meaning and drama are connected less with the visual than with the auditory, with the puzzle of the impossible that is somehow possible, the question that seems unanswerable but leads to the simple solution of the hero's dilemma, the secret that brings his life into focus.

The three riddles Baranoir answers certainly function in this way. As we noted in chapter nine, these riddles are designed to intimidate the hero by reminding him of the daughter's supernatural power. In fact they remind Baranoir of earlier triumphs. Although the correct answers are given him by Gansaol, Baranoir has earned them himself by undoing the first phase of his opponent's power by freeing the seven kings. The answers only manifest his own success.

The third riddle sounds factually geographical: Where is the middle of the world? In fact, as we have seen, it is a profound test of Baranoir's understanding of the source of power. His answer, 'Between your two feet,' suggests that his opponent's power lies not in supernatural magic but in her ability to concentrate, to find the centre in herself and order the world from there. Implicit in this answer is the corollary that Baranoir has begun to appreciate: the centre of the world is also between his own two feet. The marriage contest in which he is involved is intended precisely to determine which person will be the dominant centre.

Just as Baranoir's first two answers demonstrate that he has undermined the past power of the daughter of King Under the Wave, so his last answer shows he has mastered the secret that will allow him to resist her present power. He has already visited the Well of Fortune from which he has received the water that makes him immune to the cauldron of poison. Similarly, he has brought the Sword of Light, against which there is no defence. In these two contests it is not just that his helper deprives the daughter of these items but that Baranoir himself uses what he has won.

Whereas his opponent would have used the cauldron or sword to destroy him, Baranoir provides her with an antidote to the poison and withholds the sword stroke he could give. The marriage contest is thus revealed as a matter of life and death: his dominance means life through a union; hers means his death and her continuing to exercise a life-denying

power. Because the princess herself finally experiences the deathly results of her tests, we may speculate that she comes to that appreciation of life which Baranoir has demonstrated from the beginning in his acts of charity. Conversely, Baranoir has been pushed by her hard-edged demands and lethal tests to the point where he comes to an understanding of the source of power and a willingness to use it in a cause that is both personal and life-enhancing.

This tale offers a fuller picture of psychic integration than any other we have studied. The helper, Gansaol, represents what Jung would call a lower function of the personality successfully assimilated early on to provide the secure and slightly amoral base from which Baranoir is finally able to integrate the female side of himself. The Rees brothers' characterization of the marriage contest seems to fit perfectly:

> It symbolizes the victory of a principle from an upper realm over the sinister powers of a lower one, a victory won on the conditions set by those powers themselves. The prize is the emancipation from that lower realm of the opposite principle and the consummate union of the two. (*Celtic Heritage* 270–1)

The daughter of King Under the Wave is obviously from a 'lower realm'; she clearly demonstrates 'sinister powers' in putting the seven kings under a spell and in threatening Baranoir in her tests. The ending of the tale also bears out the Rees's claim: Baranoir emancipates her from the lower realm by bringing her back to Erin as his wife in the world, up from the magic kingdom where she has been supreme.

Max Lüthi is convinced that the riddle has a strong bond with the fairy tale:

> The fairy tale, with its love of action, [sometimes] derives the riddle ... from the plot – an unexpected but logical consequence of its style. Thus, the riddle is not a foreign substance in the fairy tale. It is firmly embedded in the totality and conforms to the style of the tale. The fairy tale and the riddle are essentially related. There are dialects which use the same word for both ... In both ... one senses something hidden and mysterious, and yet both are at the same time gay and playful in nature. (*Once upon a Time* 131)

In these views of the riddle, Lüthi is in agreement with Johan Huizinga, who took the riddle seriously and appreciated its seemingly contradictory

qualities.[3] Huizinga insists that originally the riddle was 'a sacred game and as such it cut clean across any possible distinction between play and seriousness. It was both at once: a ritual element of the highest importance and yet essentially a game' (110–11). This double view fits well with Lüthi's characterization of the riddle and the fairy tale as being not only 'hidden and mysterious' but also 'gay and playful.' Our concern is how well these paradoxical qualities fit 'Baranoir, Son of a King of Erin.'

The serious side fits the ending of the tale very well. As we have seen, the marriage contest is deadly serious. Baranoir's head could easily be forfeit. Also, the riddles are mysterious, referring to hidden matters of more importance than might at first appear. Baranoir's answer to the last one shows he possesses the secret of centring. In giving the correct answer, Baranoir both loosens the tie that might have held him bound and strikes his opponent powerless in return.

Yet the riddle contest is at the same time a game. There are correct answers, which Baranoir is given. And the game is quite formal, as can be seen in the fact that there are three riddles and in the numerical symmetry of the first two answers, 4480 and 3360. In this game there are two players who take turns. A game may be very serious, but riddles always provide a blend of the serious and the humorous. Beginning with a question that creates tension, the riddle ends with an unexpected answer (often based on a pun) that relieves the tension (often with a burst of laughter). The result is levity, which is present in Baranoir's third answer, 'Between your feet.' His answer relaxes tension and lightens the mood of the tale.

We may now return to Lüthi's assertion that the riddle and the fairy tale are both playful. Correlated with this observation is another of Lüthi's that we noted earlier, that 'the fairy tale sublimates reality,' allowing 'things which are, in reality, weighty and difficult [to] become light and transparent' (*Once upon a Time* 93).[4] Because it is a kind of play, the wonder tale can engage serious problems with a light touch. Its simplicity disarms criticism, which means it runs the risk of being dismissed as lightweight; in reality it embodies that innocent view which thwarts violence and corruption not by pretending they do not exist but by showing that they really do not govern the individual.

Huizinga referred to a 'ritual element' in the riddle; like the ritual, the riddle may express man's sense that he is involved in the larger processes of nature and destiny. This function of the riddle is especially evident at

the beginning of 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin.' The swan's rejection of the thirteenth cygnet is immediately taken by the king as a portent, a riddle he confidently expects his sage to solve. The incident thus illustrates Todorov's contention that in a fantastic narrative everything is overdetermined; it serves notice to the reader that all incidents in this world can be taken as meaningful. Like a ritual, this riddle in nature needs a mediator to make it luminous. The meaning of the swan's action is opaque to the king but clear to one versed in the sacred meanings behind natural happenings. The sage is old and blind, unable to see appearances, but confident (and correct) in his ability to see the meaning hidden from sighted persons.

There are actually four riddles in the tale, the last three being answered for another king by another old blind sage. This sage first tells the king to use the glass boot to identify the hero who saved his daughter from the sea serpent. Then he solves a subsequent mystery, that the boot apparently fits no foot in the kingdom. Finally he provides an answer to the puzzle of Sean's rough treatment of the men who come to escort him to the king. Once the king goes to Sean, all three riddles are quickly resolved.

The swan and boot riddles set the limits of Sean's important experience of anonymity; deprived of royal status by the meaning of the swan's action, he is revealed by the magic leap of the boot as the saviour of the princess and therefore her proper mate. It is as though Sean as an individual has dropped out of society between these two riddles. As we saw in chapter four, he has figuratively descended into darkness, getting in touch through his triumph over the giants with the supernatural energy which lies behind nature. Adapting Huizinga's formulation, we could say that the blind sages are ushering Sean into and out of a 'sacred game' which was initiated by 'the Diachbha' (divinity). The leap of the boot on to Sean's foot provides public corroboration of the process. The symmetry of these framing incidents makes clearer why the second king has to go to the low cowherd before the hero may be revealed. Having been demeaned by his father, Sean needs his reassumption of royal status to be mediated by another king.

From another point of view, Sean is refusing to be satisfied with the public recognition which the boot will bring. He is forcing the king to recognize him before he is revealed. We might thus say that Sean has put himself forward as a riddle which the king must solve, tacitly if not formally. In a chapter on 'the Riddle Princess,' Lüthi comments that this

figure 'can be viewed either as a person or as a symbol for the world, which presents us with its difficult riddles and threatens to destroy us if we cannot solve them' (126). Sean as 'riddle prince' is violent with the king's men until the king acknowledges him.

Baranoir encounters the more usual 'riddle princess' who has the right to put him to death if he cannot answer her. An important part of his answer is to marry her. Alan Dundes points out that riddles are often structurally appropriate to their function in a fairy tale. A riddle is built on two conflicting elements which the answer shows to belong together. It is therefore appropriate that they are often used as a test in a 'courtship ritual' where 'two unrelated ... elements or individuals,' a man and a woman, perhaps from two different tribes, in 'Baranoir' from two different worlds, 'will be united.'[5]

Another way of seeing the function of the riddle is provided by the literary scholar and theorist Andre Jolles in *Einfache Formen*. Jolles anticipated Huizinga in tracing the use of the riddle back to ancient religion; he found it functioning not as a catechism, which provides known answers to standard questions, but as an attempt to test a candidate or provoke wisdom. The riddler is like an initiate who attempts to discover if the candidate is worthy.

The fairy tale often embodies this important function of the riddle. Jolles points out that among the earliest contexts in which the riddle has been found, it is often what he calls a neck riddle, what Huizinga calls the capital or head riddle: answering these riddles is a matter of life and death; only a correct answer will save the neck or head of the guesser. The situation in the riddle of the Sphinx is the most well-known of these. Like all riddlers, the Sphinx offers an opportunity and thus takes a risk. If the guesser is correct, as Oedipus is, she loses her superiority, her power (in this case her life). But if he fails, she has the right to kill him.

The best known wonder tale involving this situation is a Persian tale, 'Turandot,' on which Schiller based a play and Puccini an opera. Like the Sphinx, the riddler in this tale is a woman who has the right to kill those who fail to answer correctly. Unlike the Sphinx, she asks her riddle only of those who come seeking to marry her, and she agrees to give her hand to the successful guesser or candidate. Where the Sphinx's riddle is based on the nature of man, Turandot's riddles point to the natural elements. Applying Jolles's analysis of the riddle as test, we can see the princess as

the asker who both desires and does not desire the riddle of her nature to be guessed.

In order to consider the further implications of this approach, we need to look at a tale in which the test is overt but the riddle covert. The obvious tale to choose is 'The Haggary Nag' since it has a structure similar to 'Baranoir' but lacks the riddle contest. Lüthi suggests why it is still fair to think of the riddle in looking at such a tale:

> In the case of Cinderella, the Simpleton or the Mangy Little Horse, that which is insignificant and despised unexpectedly proves itself to be the really valuable person or thing. In this sense, many fairy-tale figures are really riddle figures: they are not what they appear to be. Cinderella is, in her own way, the embodied riddle princess: she presents the prince with a riddle, not in words but in her appearance. This riddle he is finally able to solve, again not by words, but through his actions. (*Once upon a Time* 132)

Our name for 'the Mangy Little Horse' is 'The Haggary Nag.' By knowing to prize it when it was insignificant (and when good care of it was prohibited by the king), Cathal shows himself from the beginning able to answer the riddle of existence. But though he knows instinctively that the humble should be exalted, he still has to learn, first, that this applies to himself, and second, how exactly it is achieved. He learns slowly and with difficulty from the riddle princess.

In Jolles's formulation, Cathal is a candidate who is being tested by the princess. The riddle may be seen in the original bright hair, in the 365 windows, or in her combing her hair. Each candidate who approaches her has the possibility of answering correctly, but he can actually do so only if he approaches at the moment when she is at her most brilliant (combing her hair). Then she is amenable to any reasonable suggestion, even to taking an action which separates her from the world in which she reigns supreme. Thus the single hair which was sent to the mundane world, seemingly to lure candidates to their destruction, may also be seen as evidence of her willingness to have increased contact with that world. But to take her there is not to achieve full success. She will continue to destroy rather than wed unless an authentic candidate meets her death challenge.

Jolles points out that to answer a riddle is to break into a closed world. The riddle uses the language of our world in a special way to defend

another world from those who are unworthy. At the beginning of the tale, Cathal shows himself worthy of aid in breaking through to the world of the princess by giving the correct answer to the initial maternal riddle (choosing a blessed spirit instead of a full belly). But the riddle of the princess's power requires a greater effort to breach. Like any riddler, the princess risks all in testing because her riddle contains implicitly the answer it both hides and makes available to the candidate. That is, when she says that the island on which the Ravens of Life reside cannot be reached, then the candidate may *reason* that the answer must be to lure them from it. Cathal's task, however, is to become her equal not only in knowledge but in action.

Her riddle, put as a challenge, actually goes, 'No man nor mortal can ever reach there [the island beyond the world's end] or get that [the blood of the Ravens of Life].' The second half of the riddle is harder to solve. Neither man nor mortal, that is neither Cathal nor the nag, can get the three drops of blood from the ravens. But a carcass, being dead, is no longer mortal. Its entrails become bait to attract the ravens, while Cathal takes the place of the entrails within the carcass. He thus becomes the lowly part of a dead creature and consequently neither man nor mortal. In this guise he can successfully overcome the impossible terms and get three times three drops of the ravens' blood.

Besides being the occasion for solving one riddle, the Ravens of Life are also the vehicles of another important riddle in the tale; they become a crux. Their name suggests the paradox. Ravens are usually associated with death, not life. The description of their arrival intensifies the conventional associations: 'the wings of them shut out the sky; and though it was only noon it was black as midnight all round.' When they are killed, the riddle is solved, the truth of the paradox revealed: from their blood does come life, immediately for the nag, later for Cathal and the princess.

The ravens make a marvellous symmetry with the princess: Cathal's first view of her is of a light more brilliant than the sun, while his first view of them is of huge black wings that make noon as black as midnight. But behind the life of the princess is a death-dealing nature which Cathal is beginning to experience, while inside the ravens' dark exterior lies the life-giving blood that presumably gave them their name. The symmetrical opposition of these two transcendent forces, and the riddle in each, indicate a problem with which Cathal must come to terms. The answer to the raven riddle is that the power of life is to be found in facing death. Once

Cathal witnesses the death of the nag and himself takes the life of the ravens, he is in a position to become the equal of the princess. In putting herself forward as model she both commits herself and risks her power. If Cathal has the answer to this riddle, she has lost the ability, which she has just demonstrated anew with the king and his nobles, to put men to death. He is successful and she does relinquish, to our relief.

A more overtly verbal situation, which I termed a riddle-quest in chapter eleven, is the demand put on Arthur by the Half Slim Champion. 'I put you under bonds ... to be walking through the world, and searching always till you find the birth that has never been born, and that never will be' (*Hero-Tales* 358). The answer to the riddle stands in front of Arthur, but he cannot know it until he has gone through the experience given him by his adventures. The answer Arthur then gives is a true riddling answer: 'Try behind your own ear, and you'll find the mark on him' (371). The 'him' is that third-person object, 'the birth that has never been born.' It is also the 'you' whom Arthur is addressing. The 'mark' is the mark of the beast, the scar where a wolf's teeth ripped open a she-wolf's womb to liberate a creature that was therefore never born and can never be. The scene of this non-birth is one of the important cruxes in the tale. Pictorial, dramatic, and full of meaning, this revelation of the Half Slim Champion is all the more a crux because it contains the answer to the original riddle.

In another sense, we could say that the king-wolf solves the original riddle. Knowing that there is no possibility of disenchanting the she-wolf so it may give birth naturally, he performs the Caesarian section which kills the mother and liberates the child. The unnatural creature 'grew to the size of a man in one moment' (369) and attacks its liberator. Looking at this scene as the charade of a riddle, we could apply Huizinga's characterization of the answer to one, the 'sudden *solution* – a loosening of the tie' (110) that binds. The king-wolf's sudden slash loosens the confined child. Generalizing this double condition, the bound state and being loosed from it (or the imprisoned state and being freed from it), we find another similarity between the riddle and each of the wonder tales we have studied.

To continue with 'The Half Slim Champion,' we can note that the obviously imprisoned person in the story is the king as we first meet him in his own castle. His son takes him out of a hollow place in the wall, where he has been hiding from the champion. Once freed, the champion

has caused the king to imprison himself, nor can the king be freed until the champion's version of the riddle is both answered and enacted. Arthur's answer precipitates his decisive battle with the champion. As I suggested in chapter eleven, when Arthur kills the champion, he is resolving the riddle of his opponent's existence. He removes from life an anomaly, a creature of unnatural origin, something that had no right to be. And when the king is given evidence of this removal, he breaks free of his self-imposed prison, in a scene which constitutes the other crux of this tale, the revelation of what was hidden, the should-be ruler restored.

The king is not the only self-imprisoned person we have encountered. The Queen of Tubber Tintye is a sleeping prisoner in her own castle, guarded by her own magic creatures and spells. Similarly, the Princess of the Hill of the World's End is, if not a prisoner, self-isolated in her castle. But more commonly persons are imprisoned by others and have ambivalent feelings about it. The King of Erin is kept prisoner by magic in the garden of the Lonesome Island so that he will not leave its queen. Sean, the fisherman's son, as a hawk is made a prisoner in a carriage by the maiden who becomes enamored of him. Similarly, Sgiathan Dearg as a bird is put in a cage by the Princess Noinin. Sean turns into a man and lets himself out. Sgiathan also turns into a man but cannot get out on his own. As a man in Noinin's room he is satisfied, but as a bird he has to escape because he is under the spell of the Queen of Gleann Dearg. He is then held prisoner in the other world until Noinin's son (and his) releases him. Sean also experiences prison again, this time taken by the hag of the sea down into her castle. He escapes in what amounts to an exchange when his wife is abducted. In then labouring to free her, he is freeing a surrogate of himself. Her agreeing to imprisonment is thus as essential to their final free and secure union as is his own voluntary return to the castle to kill the sea hag.

The situation in which Sean finds himself lends itself to another allied set of terms which are necessary to an understanding of the dynamics of the wonder tale. To say that he achieves success by a voluntary return to the castle is to say that he can realize his destiny only when of his own free will he confronts his fate. Belonging to the beautiful lady of the sea is a fate outside of Sean's control. His refusal to submit to that fate makes it worse: the lady becomes a hag who abducts him since he will not come of his own free will. Only through the loving intervention of his new wife is he freed to go to the hag voluntarily, to take the step that will turn this fate into a destiny of integrity.

We might say that Sean's father makes a bargain with Fate when he makes his son a hostage to his own good fortune. Another fisherman makes a similar bargain in apprenticing his son to the Gruagach. When rescued, the son promptly makes his own bargain, in bad faith, by allowing himself to be sold as a hound, but the Gruagach outwits him. Finally he is forced to free himself in a direct confrontation with his fate, just as Sean is.

Fate most often appears in wonder tales as the spell of enchantment that has imprisoned a human being, whether it be in a castle or in some animal's body. To alter this fate then becomes the task of some other human being. When Sgiathan Dearg answers the reproaches of his abandoned wife, he provides some insight into the small opening that even a seemingly implacable fate actually leaves for the human will to operate: 'I was under the magic of the Queen of Gleann Dearg to be in her castle as a man every night [while a bird by day] except three nights in seven years; and those were the nights I spent in your father's castle' (*Irish Folk-tales* 111). During those three days, however, he did what he could, planted the seed that would emerge as the son who finally freed him.

Similarly, Cathal learns that the Princess of the Hill of the World's End must kill everyone who approaches her 'except on one particular hour of one particular day in every seven years' (146). Unlike Sgiathan, the princess is not under another's spell. Like the Queen of Tubber Tintye or the daughter of King Under the Wave, she appears to create her own fate. But she does leave a loophole, as they have also; in her case it is the combing of her hair. Since it was a hair of her head in his world that attracted Cathal and was responsible for his quest, we may speculate that this hair of beauty and light represents the willingness of the princess to be relieved of her fate. This willingness seems to be shared by all these queens and princesses; they are ready to let go of their destructive or binding power.

Since the Queen of Gleann Dearg allows Sgiathan three free days, we can speculate that she too provides for such an outcome. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that these female rulers desire to have their power tested. But whence comes their power? The structure of the tale often provides a good indication. Sometimes it is abdication of power by the king, as in 'The Half Slim Champion.' More often it is the king's usurping too much power. Cathal and Baranoir, who face the two most deadly of these princesses, both do so at the demand of a king. Cathal's king threatens death for failure and is later revealed as a cruel enchanter. Baranoir's king is faceless, uncharacterized. But Baranoir is sent off on a

life of adventure by his father, a king who demands that his sons marry their sisters. Such cruel or unnatural authority, such a misuse of conscious masculine power must inevitably call up unconscious female resistance. The young man who is sent to subdue that resistance succeeds only if he repudiates such authority. But even if he does, he must still meet the aggression that has been gathered against all masculine power. Only through trickery can he meet and only through his own worth can he overcome this aggression to form the necessary union with the female power that will allow him to overcome the misused dominance of masculine authority.

The place of fate in this scheme is an interesting question. By focusing on the internal conflict we have discovered another basis for understanding what fate is. It is the inevitable result of actions taken. A man – or better, one function of the mind – may choose to assert its dominance. But if it does, any function it has overridden will find a way to express itself. If denied conscious expression it will make itself manifest unconsciously – that is, in actions or even outside events which thwart and undermine the imperious authority. Malign fate is thus no more than all those denied parts of the self manifesting themselves in the only way left to them.[6] It is the business of wonder tales to take the reader through a process that begins with such a denial or imbalance, confronts the force of fate that results, and converts it into a union of opposites; this union is the integration which is an individual's true destiny.

Todorov's realization that tales involving the supernatural are governed by pan-determinism has a bearing on our investigation of fate and destiny. If all actions in a wonder tale are determined, then the outcome would appear to be entirely governed by fate. In chapter seven we saw how such a view would be quite compatible with the belief of the pagans that every event in their lives was caused by some benign or malign supernatural power. But modern man is much freer of such beliefs. Because we see our universe as determined by natural laws, however, the problem of fate is still with us. The wonder tale is thus just as relevant to that issue as it ever was, as long as we take it imaginatively rather than literally. It tells us that forces which seem to threaten and dominate often are only testing us and secretly want to loosen their hold. It suggests that each event is important in itself and should be met with quiet optimism. It lets us realize that we should respond to fate not as a blow to bring us down but as an opportunity to integrate that which furthers our individual destinies.

APPENDIXES

SOURCES

NOTES

INDEX

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A Types and Motifs of the International Folk Tale

THE SYSTEM of tale-types I have used is taken from Stith Thompson *The Types of the Folktale* (Folklore Fellows Communication 184 [1928; Helsinki 1961]). All the Irish tales appearing in this book fall into one section of the book, 'Tales of Magic.' The relevant subsections are 'Supernatural Adversaries,' 'Supernatural or Enchanted Spouse,' 'Supernatural Helpers,' and 'Magic Objects.' These categories are not mutually exclusive; any one story may well have all four of these elements in it. But the categories do provide a means of identifying the dominant concern in particular tales. The whole section 'Tales of Magic' numbers its types from 300 through 749 and contains three other subsections, which will not concern us.

Each type has an identifying tag. To give some idea of how the typing works, I have listed in the accompanying table under an appropriate heading, number, and description the stories that are considered in detail in this book.

A minor problem faced by Thompson was finding a heading that identifies the type. Number 316 draws its name from the Grimm version. The analogy between the Nix of the Mill Pond and 'The Hag of the Sea' is not hard to make, but neither phrase makes clear the distinctive narrative sequence which allows Thompson's précis of the German tale to be a quite adequate summary of the Irish one: 'A boy has been unwittingly promised to a water nix and tries to avoid carrying out the promise. From grateful animals he receives the ability to transform himself into their shapes. He does fall into the water nix's power, but is finally rescued partly by the help of his wife ... and partly through his ability to transform himself' (58).

A more important problem is that a particular tale will often differ considerably from the type it has to be catalogued under. In placing

'Baranoir' under number 507A, the Monster's Bride, I have followed the scholar who edited this tale. But in fact, unlike the princess in 'The King of Greece's Daughter,' the one Baranoir tries to win is involved with neither a monster nor any other paramour. Obviously, an essential ingredient of the type is missing in this excellent Irish tale.

Another important difficulty with the typing of tales can be seen by noting that 'Baranoir' appears under not only 507A but also 531. Neither type alone gives an adequate sense of this tale. The same is true for 'The Daughter of the King of Greece' (302 and 400) and 'The Speckled Bull' (425 and 510). This combining of two or more types in one story is by no means unusual, especially in Irish tales. Dissatisfaction with this difficulty led to the production of another approach, the motif index, which I shall consider presently.

Tales which include more than one type may simply tack one plot on to another, or more compellingly will integrate them. The Tsar's Dog, for instance, often appears in Irish tales as an inset story, told by a minor character as part of an explanation of a problem set the hero. Even where a type as sub-plot could be left out without damage to the main plot, it may be thematically relevant and structurally helpful, as suggested in chapter six.

Although I have tried to choose tales that represent distinct types, I have twice chosen two tales that represent the same type, including one tale ('Baranoir') that fits under both types (the Monster's Bride [507A] and the Clever Horse [531]). The reasons for this seeming duplication are indicated in chapters eight, nine, and ten. In both cases there are significant variations between the two tales of each type. The thematic result of combining the central motifs from both types in 'Baranoir' are more important than one might expect from any folkloristic study of either type separately.

Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (Bloomington: University of Indian Press 1932–6) is based on the quite valid principle that much of what is important about folk tales will emerge from a catalogue of the different bits of content or motifs of which the tales are made and which vary only moderately from country to country. Thus, under the motif of 'Other World Journeys,' which are found in tales all over the world, Thompson lists the various methods of making the journey: by rope, basket, arrow chain, window, bird, stair, bridge, and so on.

Certain inconsistencies are apparent in the organization of these motifs. Thrown in with the *means* of reaching the other world, for instance, are categories relating to *goals*, not all parallel ('Journey to earthly Paradise' has the same conceptual status as 'Submarine otherworld'). To complain of such details of organization may seem trivial in the face of Thompson's monumental drawing together of motifs, but those who approach folk tales from a structuralist point of view think the defects of his motif approach are very serious indeed. Alan Dundes claims that Thompson's refusal to define what a motif is can be taken as symptomatic of a confusion in the organizing principle of his work.[1] The structuralist is interested in form or relations among parts rather than in content or motifs as such.

Despite structuralist reservations about the listing of motifs, the fact remains that Thompson's approach is useful to anyone interested in an overview of the constituent parts of wonder tales. His work with tale-types is also helpful. Even *The Types of the Folktale* is, however, primarily a compilation. Thompson's discussion of the types in his later book *The Folktale* (1946; Berkeley: University of California Press 1977) has much more to offer the interested reader. A modern example of the classifying of individual tales into sub-types, discussion of the relation of type to motif, and a tracing of the origin and spread of one tale is Anna B. Rooth's study *The Cinderella Cycle* (see chap 9, n 5).

TALES OF MAGIC

300–99 *Supernatural Adversaries*

300 The Dragon-Slayer: 'The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin' (chap four)

302 The Ogre's Heart in the Egg: 'The Daughter of the King of Greece' (chap six)

316 The Nix of the Mill Pond: 'The Fisherman of Kinsale and the Hag of the Sea' (chap three)

325 The Magician and His Pupil: 'The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks' (chap two)

400–59 *Supernatural or Enchanted Husband (Wife) or Other Relative*

400 The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife: 'The Daughter of the King of Greece' (chap six)

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B The Thirty-one Steps of Vladimir Propp

LOUIS WAGNER, the editor of the second English edition of *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1928; Austin: University of Texas Press 1968), explains that an accurate translation would have used 'fairy tale' instead of 'folktale' in the title. In fact, like the wonder tales discussed in this study, Propp's tales belong to the section called 'Tales of Magic' in Thompson's list of types (see Appendix A).

In chapter three of his book Propp enumerates 'The Functions of the Dramatis Personae' (25). Most of these functions (or steps in the plot sequence) have subheads that describe common forms the action will take. I have omitted these subheads in the list that follows, giving instead a résumé or commentary where relevant. I have also omitted the numbers 1–31, retaining the alphabetical 'designation' and the short 'definition' by which Propp himself usually refers to them. The sequence begins with an initial situation, which Propp does not include in his list. (I have substituted lower-case Roman for Propp's Greek letters in the first seven functions.)

b absentation: One of the members of a family absents himself from home. (This is not a common step. The family member who leaves – or dies – is not the hero.)

c interdiction: An interdiction is addressed to the hero. (This common occurrence may be either a prohibition, an order, or a suggestion.)

d violation: The interdiction is violated. (This step always follows c.)

e reconnaissance: The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance. (This step may be inverted: the victim may ask the villain a leading question.)

f delivery: The villain receives information about his victim. (Or the victim may elicit information.)

g trickery: The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings.
h complicity: The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy.

Propp here begins his alphabetical list anew with Roman capital letters, claiming that 'the first seven functions may be regarded as the *preparatory part* of the tale' 31. Function VIII is subdivided into A, 'villainy,' and a, 'lack.'

A villainy: The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family. (This step may take many forms: violence, theft, abduction, etc.)
a lack: One member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something. (The need here may be for a cure or for a person, eg, a bride.)
B mediation, the connective incident: Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched. (That is, he may go either as the seeker hero or the victim hero; see chap two.)
C beginning counteraction: The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction.
↑ departure: The hero leaves home.

These first four steps in the plot Propp terms the complication.

D the first function of the donor: The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc, which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper.
E the hero's reaction: The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor. (The hero may undergo a test or help or free someone.)
F provision or receipt of a magical agent: The hero acquires the use of a magical agent.

Propp discusses in some detail the possible interconnections between steps D and F.

G spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance: The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search.
H struggle: The hero and the villain join in direct combat.

This step can be distinguished from D, the 'fight with a hostile donor ... by their results,' 51. If the hero obtains a helpful agent, it is D; if he uses a helpful agent to attain victory in his quest, it is H. This distinction is the basis for Meletinsky's later separation of the preliminary from the basic test; see chap four.

J branding, marking: The hero is branded.
I victory: The villain is defeated.
K remedy: The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated. (The hero retrieves the object of his quest – usually a cure or a person. Since no defining term is included for this function, I have supplied *remedy*.)

Propp points out that functions A and K make a pair and that 'the narrative reaches its peak with this function' 53.

↓ return: The hero returns.
Pr pursuit, chase: The hero is pursued.
Rs rescue: Rescue of the hero from pursuit. (The hero may save himself – by his flight, his magic, or his aggressiveness – or he may be saved by a helper.)
° unrecognized arrival: The hero unrecognized arrives home or in another country. (The other country is often a kingdom where he will marry and/or rule.)

The following sequence of five steps is sometimes an alternative to steps HJIK above. Since Q, 'recognition,' is paired with °, 'unrecognized arrival,' it will often appear when LMNEx do not.

L unfounded claims: A false hero presents unfounded claims.
M difficult task: A difficult task is proposed to the hero.
N solution: The task is resolved.
Q recognition: The hero is recognized.
Ex exposure: The false hero or villain is exposed.

The sequence °LMNQEx entails the third or additional test of the three abstracted from Propp's functions by Meletinsky. For a discussion of other structural reductions of Propp's scheme, see Robert Scholes *Structuralism in Literature* [New Haven: Yale University Press 1974].

T transfiguration: The hero is given a new appearance.
U punishment: The villain is punished.
W wedding: The hero is married and ascends the throne.

In his final chapter, 'The Tale as a Whole,' Propp discusses the usual and exceptional relation of functions to one another and works out the two dominant patterns in wonder tales. For some indication of the complications and the exceptions in Propp's system, see chapter two and its notes.

C A Guide to the Pronunciation of Gaelic Words

IN WRITING DOWN most of the stories used in this book, the person who transcribed it has given an English spelling for the Irish names. The following list omits such Anglicized names and includes only those Gaelic words that are not pronounced as we would expect from the English transliteration. Since most of the tales are from the west of Ireland, the Connaught pronunciation is given throughout.

Banais Righi	Bon' nish Ree
Baranoir	Borr' on oh ir
Conchobar	Con' a her
Cormac	Cor' muck
Cu Chulainn	Coo hull' in
Dervorgil	Der vorr' gil
Diachbha	Dyee' ach vuh
Emer	Ay' ver
Fann	Fonn
Fomorians	Fo more' ians
geis	gyesh
gessa	gyass' uh
Gleann Dearg	Glan Dyar' rug
Gleann Glas	Glan Gloss
Labraid	Lou' ri
Manannan MacLir	Monn' en en Mock Lir'
Nechta	Nyech' ta
Niall	Nee' ul
Noinin	No' neen
Samain	Sov' in
Sgiathan Dearg	Skee' a hawn Dyar' rug
tarbfess	tor' rub fess

Sources of the Tales

Reference by short title and page number to the sources of the tales summarized in each chapter are included in the texts of the tales.

Ancient Irish Tales ed Tom Cross and Clark Slover 1936; New York: Barnes and Noble 1969

Children of the Salmon and Other Irish Folktales ed and trans Eileen O'Faolain, Boston: Little Brown 1965

Curtin, Jeremiah *Irish Folk-Tales* ed Seamus Duilearga (James Delargy) 1944; Dublin: Talbot Press 1967

– *Hero-Tales of Ireland* 1894; New York: Benjamen Blom 1971

– *Myths and Folk Tales of Ireland* 1890; New York: Dover Publications 1975

The Literature of Ancient Egypt trans Edward F. Wente, Jr, ed William Kelly Simpson, New Haven: Yale University Press 1973

MacManus, Seumus *The Well o' the World's End* New York: Devon-Adair 1939

O Suilleabhain (O'Sullivan), Sean *Folktales of Ireland* Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1966

Tshimshian Texts ed and trans Franz Boas, Bureau of Indian Ethnology bulletin 27, Washington 1902

Notes

The sources of the tales that are summarized in each chapter appear in the preceding list of sources.

PROLOGUE

1 This tale has been analysed from a Jungian point of view by Heinrich Zimmer in *The King and the Corpse: Tales of the Soul's Conquest of Evil* (1948; New York: Meridian 1960) 26–52.
2 The first edition of Yeats's *Folk and Fairy Tales of the Irish Peasantry* appeared in 1888. I have used the Modern Library edition of 'The Story of Conn-eda; or the Golden Apples of Lough Erne' *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* (New York, nd) 328.
3 *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Alfred Knopf 1976). Though a Freudian, Bettelheim brings in sex no more than is reasonable (in my view) and shows a commendable eclecticism in his concern with individuation (a very Jungian concern).
4 I exaggerate slightly. The Cinderella type is listed 302 times and 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' 63 times in S. O Suilleabhain and R. Christiansen *The Types of the Irish Folktale* (Folklore Fellows Communication 188 [Helsinki 1963]). But of the tales I have listed, three have no Irish version; 'Rapunzel' has one; 'Hansel and Gretel' ten; and 'The Frog King' thirteen.
5 James Delargy 'The Gaelic Story-teller. With some Notes on Gaelic Folktales' *Rhys Memorial Lecture* 1945, in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 1945, 193, 199
6 Douglas Hyde, in *Beside the Fire* (London: D. Nutt 1890), faulted Curtin for using some English (ie non-Gaelic) idioms, but more recently Alan Bruford

has praised Curtin's translations as 'in general very accurate' (*Gaelic Folk Tales and Medieval Romances* [Dublin 1969] 228; see also 118). Delargy, another modern authority, has been generous in his praise, both in the introduction to his collection of Curtin's translations and as quoted by another translator in her impressive collection – Eileen O'Faolain, in *Children of the Salmon*: 'Dr. Delargy pronounced them [the tales Curtin collected] to be "the best ever recorded"' (vii).

7 This is not to deny that a tale which is much told and well told in one country may be comparatively scarce and often poorly told in the country next to it. Some tales fit one culture and appear foreign in another, but the translation need not have any bearing on this social fact.

8 *Once upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales* trans Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press 1976) 126

9 The Gaelic story-tellers did develop a more ornate style than some other cultures. They used set descriptive pieces, called *rainn*, at certain points in the narrative: when the hero starts in his ship, when he anchors it, when he challenges the villain, when they fight, and so on. But these are formulas which do not influence the plot-line; they are not much missed in a written-down tale.

10 *Myth: A Symposium* ed Thomas A. Sebeok (1955; Bloomington: University of Indiana Press 1965) 85–6

11 *The European Folktale: Form and Nature* trans John Niles (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues 1982) 23, 79, 83, 84, 88

12 To those readers who wonder why I left out the woman's connection with the Gruagach, I should say that, though the father gets to the house, he does not see (or look for) her son there, nor does he ever see the woman again. In other words, here and generally in my retellings I omit some interesting details that are not relevant to the plot or theme.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

1 As reported by John Messenger in his article 'Joe O'Donnel, *Seanchai* of Aran' *Journal of the Folk Lore Institute* 1 (1964) 263

2 Some of these older tales make quite coherent and well-shaped stories; a number of them have been published in the volume of translations *Ancient Irish Tales*, included in the list of sources. The scope and quality of these tales provide an impressive sense of the narrative imagination of medieval Ireland.

3 'Mythology in Early Irish Literature,' in *The Celtic Consciousness* ed Robert O'Driscoll (Portlaoise, Ireland: Dolman Press 1982) 145
4 *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies 1955) 192
5 *Studies in Irish Literature* 192; *Gaelic Folk Tales* 27
6 In *There Was a King in Ireland* (Austin: University of Texas Press 1971), Myles Dillon collected and translated five oral tales whose special virtue, he claimed, was that they 'exactly reproduce the original Irish ... The book therefore gives a true account of oral tradition, such as is not to be found in Curtin' and others (7). Although four of the five tales came from the 'best storyteller' Dillon 'ever met,' to my taste they are not first-rate tales, *in print*. He includes 'The Black Thief' and claims that Curtin gives only a 'summarized form' of the story. 'The Black Knight' in Curtin's *Hero-Tales of Ireland* does have less detail about the knight and his attempt to steal some horses than does Dillon's. But Curtin's version includes full tellings of the knight's four inset stories, which are more interesting than the three stories told by the thief in Dillon's version. Curtin's version is long and dramatized, in no sense a summary.

CHAPTER ONE

1 *Gods and Heroes of the Celts* trans Myles Dillon (London: Methuen 1949) xvii–xviii. The stallion as chief with great sexual powers is familiar in Ireland. See Anne Ross's discussion of Fergus son of Great Horse in *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge 1967) 326.
2 Proinsias MacCana *Celtic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn 1970) 117, 119. See also T.F. O'Rahilley *Early Irish History and Mythology* (1946; Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies 1971) 323.
3 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel' *Ancient Irish Tales* 97
4 Actually, the Druids advise that the boy's blood be 'mingled with the soil of Ireland' (494) even before Conn goes on his quest. I take this fact as an error in transmission; otherwise we have to assume that Conn lied to the king and queen, and his subsequent outrage makes no sense.
5 'The Archaism of Irish Tradition' *Rhys Memorial Lecture* 1947, in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 1947, 247
6 Myles Dillon *The Cycles of the Kings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1946) 24–5. See also Alwyn and Brinley Rees *Celtic Heritage* (London: Thames and Hudson 1961) 128–30, 311–12.

7 This tale is listed under type 550, 'The Bird, the Horse, and the Princess,' in O Suilleabhain and Christiansen *Types of the Irish Folktale* 116–17. They record 267 tellings of this type. As I indicate in Appendix A, in *The Types of the Folktale* Stith Thompson provides a composite analysis of types 550 and 551, 'Sons on a Quest for a Wonderful Remedy.' It contains an outline close to the prince's adventures in Curtin's tale.

8 For marriage in Celtic times, see Ann Ross *Everyday Life of the Pagan Celts* (London: Batsford 1970) 113. For reference to the legal position of a second wife, see Dillon *Cycles of the Kings* 38.

9 The Jungians have pioneered this sympathetic approach to the fairy tale. See Carl Jung 'The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales' (1953), in vol 9, pt 1 of his *Collected Works* (New York: Pantheon 1953). See also Zimmer *The King and the Corpse*; and Marie-Louise von Franz *An Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales* (1970; Zurich: Spring Publications 1975). This author has also written several other books on the fairy tale. As mentioned in the Prologue, I shall also be taking up the views of a non-Jungian analyst, Bruno Bettelheim.

10 *Metamorphosis* bk XII, trans Mary Innes (1955; Harmondsworth: Penguin 1970) 310, 309

11 *The Republic* bk X, trans Francis Cornford (1945; New York: Oxford University Press 1967) 346

12 Both these figures are mentioned by Stith Thompson in *The Folktale* (see Appendix A) 60, 259. The first is discussed in detail by Richard Bernheimer in *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1952). The Hairy Anchorite is discussed in Zimmer *The King and the Corpse* 52–66.

13 In Jungian theory, paired opposites make a stable psychological construction. Jung characterizes 'the quaternity' as 'the four functions or aspects of the self ... or of consciousness,' one of 'the organizing dominants' in his theory of archetypes; see *Symbols of Transformation* (New York: Harper 1956) 391. There is certainly a symmetry in the prince's becoming king in union with the queen of the other world while the older queen moves into a balancing union with the king of this world.

CHAPTER TWO

1 The tale-type is the Magician and his Pupil (325 in Thompson's *Types of the Folktale*); O Suilleabhain and Christiansen list 221 recordings of the tale in

Types of the Irish Folktale. According to Thompson, this is one of the most popular of all folk tales. It has been studied by two scholars, both of whom come to the conclusion that it originated in India and was thence carried into Europe (*Folktale* 69). Thompson mentions that 'the details of the story remain remarkably constant wherever it is told' (69).

2 In his notes Curtin mentions that Gruagach means 'the hairy one' (244). He is usually a supernatural character.

3 *The Gaping Pig: Literature and Metamorphosis* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1976) 49

4 *Animals with Human Faces* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 1973) 76

5 *Morphology* (see Appendix B) 20. Here, as in many of the quotations to follow, I have not indicated when Propp has put sentences and headings in italics or capital letters.

6 Propp's conclusion is that each variation constitutes an 'inverted sequence' (107). Archer Taylor has pointed out that Propp acknowledges yet another category of tale which has neither of these sections. Since these constitute 30 out of 104, Taylor complains that Propp had no right simply to dismiss them without comment. See 'The Biographical Pattern in Traditional Narrative' *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964) 127.

7 In fact, I have left out an alternate section of the schema in which HJI may be replaced by MJN – in which, that is, the combat with the villain is replaced by the hero's solving or resolving a difficult task to be imposed on him. Both sequences appear in 'The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks.'

8 Propp admits that the positioning of T is the most unstable of any function (*Morphology* 108).

CHAPTER THREE

1 *Shadow and Evil in Fairytales* (Zurich: Spring Publications 1974) 129

2 *Symbols of Transformation* 308–9

CHAPTER FOUR

1 'Marriage: Its Function and Position in Folktales,' in *Soviet Structural Folkloristics* ed P. Miranda (The Hague: Mouton 1974) 1, 68

2 'Myth as Metastructure of the Fairytale,' in *Soviet Structural Folkloristics* 1, 166. Reid sees no structural difference between myth and wonder tale, but she does see a difference in their use and impact.
3 'Urféist. This word is made up of *Ur* and *féist*. *Ur* is kindred with the German *Ur*, and in a compound like this means the "original" or "greatest." *Féist* – "worm," "beast," "monster"' (Curtin *Myths and Folk Tales* 245).
4 E. Meletinsky, S. Nekludov, E. Novik, and D. Segal 'Problems of the Structural Analysis of Fairytales,' in *Soviet Structural Folkloristics* 1, 131
5 Victor Turner *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Press 1969) 97, 105
6 *The Destiny of the Warrior* trans Alf Hiltebeitel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1970) 135

CHAPTER FIVE

1 He could have killed the pretenders by appearing before being sent for. I have argued that he gains the king's abasement by further recalcitrance. But Bruno Bettelheim makes a general point about wonder-tale heroes that may apply here and in other tales. 'Sometimes sexual anxieties surface behind fantasies of outlandish courage: after the dauntless hero has won the princess, he avoids her, as if his courage would enable him to do battle, but not to love' (*Uses of Enchantment* 280).
2 I say 'seems to' because the manuscript is confused at this point. As Cross and Slover point out, some scribe tried to bridge the gap between two different versions, with resulting duplication, inconsistency, and omissions (*Ancient Irish Tales* 176, 184).
3 This tale was collected by Seumas MacManus (1869–1960), who was born in Ireland and immigrated to the United States around the turn of the century. He grew up in an English-speaking community in Donegal. In the hills behind, however, lived Gaelic speakers who brought oral tales to the community. According to MacManus, 'before he was ten the boy knew and could himself tell, like any shanachie of them, a full hundred of the old tales' in English (*The Rocky Road to Dublin* [New York: Macmillan 1938] 169).
4 In the extensive collection of *Dindsenchas* ('Stories of places') collected in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Ireland, one story deals with Connla's well. A granddaughter of Ler (Sea) goes out of Tir Tairngire (Land of Promise) to this well, which lies under the sea. Over the well grow the nine hazels of wisdom. The fruit, blossoms, and leaves all break out at the same time;

when they fall in the well, the salmon chew the fruit. 'And seven streams of wisdom spring forth' (*The Rennes Dindsenchas* ed Whitley Stokes *Revue Celtique* XV, 547). There is also a legend about King Cormac's adventures in the other world that refers to a similar well (*Ancient Irish Tales* 505, 507).

5 Following an unfulfilled first sequence, these two take the place of the additional test and prove Jack's right to his bride and to the status of hero. His situation is comparable to that of Sean, the fisherman's son, who also wins his wife before he really certifies himself as hero. Sean passes the preliminary test properly but not the basic test. In contrast, Jack has no preliminary test but passes the basic test properly. This lack in both cases causes the additional test to take a form more like a basic test.

CHAPTER SIX

1 *The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance* (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag 1933)
2 *Early Irish Literature* (1948; Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1958) xv
3 *Once upon a Time* 78. Reinhard also discusses taboos in *Survival of Geis* (introduction and passim). For a structuralist approach, see Ann Dooley 'The Heroic Word: The Reading of Early Irish Sagas,' in *Gaelic Consciousness* 155–9.
4 This tale was first published in Gaelic in 1899.
5 Thompson's tale-type 400. Because of the last episode, O Suilleabhain and Christiansen classify this tale under type 302, 'Ogre's (Devil's) Heart in an Egg' (though with a cross-reference to 400). The particular plot has more in common with a widespread romance: see Reinhard *Survival of Geis* chap 19.
6 'The Historical Morphology of the Folktale,' in *Soviet Structural Folkloristics* I, 57
7 *Structuralism in Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1974) 110
8 Since she recognizes him only after seeing it, it is quite possible that the teller has imperfectly adapted tale-type 313C, 'The Forgotten Fiancé,' in which the ring breaks a spell of forgetfulness.
9 'Marriage: Its Function and Position in Folktales,' in *Soviet Structural Folkloristics* I, 61–2

PART TWO: INTRODUCTION

1 In *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958), quoted by Mary Douglas *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1977) 161

2 Ibid
3 Ibid 79–80. But see also 88–93.
4 In *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, trans Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Row 1958) 65
5 (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1964, 1979) 485
6 Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1958

CHAPTER SEVEN

1 In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1975)
2 A more systematic survey of the fantastic is offered by Eric Rabkin in *The Fantastic in Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1976). Although he does not do much with fairy tales, Rabkin does extend the domain of the fantastic by emphasizing not only ways in which it distorts received opinions about reality but also ways in which it calls attention to its own fictiveness, as the wonder tale does not.
3 The relation between language and transformation is also dealt with by Massey in *The Gaping Pig*.
4 *Aion: Contributions to the Symbolism of the Self*, in *Collected Works*, vol 9, pt II; quoted here from *Psyche and Symbol* ed Violet de Laszlo (New York: Anchor 1958) 4
5 As Bettelheim points out, readers do not in fact empathize only with protagonists of the same sex (*Uses of Enchantment* 17, 58).
6 I say *should* because the order is actually different. Loath as I am to revise, in the best tales a gift immediately precedes its need. The cap and rod should thus come third rather than second.
7 We are not told of the problem until just before the transformation. Are we to assume the tale has taken place in darkness? The son's wife asks that he be given health and strength again. Once he is transformed, we are told that he is 'restored to strength and brightness' (111), which implies that his light has been out. Allegorical characters always create problems of this sort. I would suggest that since the sun has shone and set throughout the story, we are not intended to take this character as the physical sun.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1 This death is implicit rather than explicit in the text (107).
2 C.W. von Sydow, as reported by Thompson in *Folktale* 275

3 *Literature of Ancient Egypt* 92
4 Bettelheim, in his helpful discussion of 'Cinderella,' suggests that the existence of this version and the emphasis on the small foot and precious slipper 'point to an Eastern, if not necessarily Chinese, origin' (*Uses of Enchantment* 236). Thompson cites a lecture on this version (*Folktale* 126), and Iona and Peter Opie give a résumé and cite an English translation (*The Classic Fairy Tales* [Oxford: Oxford University Press 1974] 120–1).
5 These variants were first distinguished by Marion Cox in *Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty Five Variants* (London: David Nutt 1893) xxv. Building on her work and expanding its geographic and analytic scope, Anna B. Rooth, in *The Cinderella Cycle* (New York: Arno Press 1980), has come to a number of interesting conclusions. Although she is pleased to note the antiquity of 'The Two Brothers' (140), she places the incest variant of 'Cinderella' as a medieval romantic tale because of the 'literary interest' in 'sin and guilt, erotic deeds and incest' (117). Since all of these are present in 'The Two Brothers,' I find it difficult to accept her opinion of the 'later origin' of the fairy tale; its survival and its handling of the motifs could, on the other hand, certainly be attributed to medieval concerns.
6 *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (1956; New York: Schocken 1976) 164
7 C.G. Jung 'On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure' *The Trickster* 197

CHAPTER NINE

1 This tale combines the international tale-type of the Clever Horse (531) with the Grateful Dead Man (507). 'Baranoir' also contains an incident borrowed from the life of the Irish hero Finn Mac Cumhall in which he eats the salmon of wisdom.
2 The Sioux shaman whose vision dreams are described in *Black Elk Speaks* made much of the idea of a centre in them. In the great vision, Black Elk 'was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about ... was the whole hoop of the world.' He named the actual peak on which he had stood, then added, 'but anywhere is the centre of the world' (*Black Elk Speaks*, as told through John G. Neihardt [1932; Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press 1961] 43).
3 I would argue that the sister of seven kings is more than a physical double of the daughter of King Under the Wave. Baranoir has to 'win' the sister when she is a filly by passing three tests. Another parallel between the two

women rests on the close relation to water that both have. Just as the filly takes Baranoir under the surface of the River of Enchantment and challenges him to respond properly (by filling three bottles), so later on he is challenged by the king's daughter to immerse himself in her boiling cauldron and come out safely.

Again, just as the filly is mortally wounded by the boiling water and poison of the Well of Fate – only to be saved by Gansaol with water he has obtained from the Well of Fortune – so the king's daughter is mortally wounded by the boiling water and poison from her own cauldron – only to be saved by fluid obtained from the salmon Baranoir caught. Gansaol and Baranoir are paired not only in being able to provide an antidote but in their ability to withstand the boiling water and poison. I would therefore take Gansaol as Baranoir's servant double, just as the filly is the humble surrogate of the king's daughter.

CHAPTER TEN

1 It was known in India, the Near East, and Rome, according to the Rees brothers (*Celtic Heritage* 73–6).
2 MacCana connects the libation with the goddess-queen Medhb, 'the Intoxicating One,' who was reported to have slept with nine kings of Ireland (120).
3 'The Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Mugmedon,' in *Ancient Irish Tales* 511–12. Parallels are cited by Dillon in *Cycles of the Kings* 38.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1 See Sean O Suilleabhain (O'Sullivan) *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (Hartford Penn: Folklore Association 1942); and Augusta Gregory *Visions and Beliefs of the West of Ireland* (1920; Oxford: Oxford University Press 1970).
2 'On Fairy-Stories,' in *The Tolkien Reader* (1947; New York: Ballantine 1966) 37
3 This connection is most readily evident in William Larminie's 'Story of Bioultach,' in *West Irish Folk-Tales and Romances* (1893; Totowa NJ: Littlefield and Rowman 1976).
4 See the explanation by Pat Shaw Iverson in the introduction to *Norwegian Folk Tales* (New York: Viking 1960) 6. Curtin, in his notes to our tale, con-

nects ashes with mourning (*Hero-Tales* 556). This point is developed and enlarged by Bettelheim in his analysis of 'Cinderella' (*Uses of Enchantment* 259, 270).

5 Marius Barbeau *Tsimsyan Myths* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada 1961) 40–1. In this tale, 'Strong Man Who Holds up the World,' the youngest turns out to be training in secret to become a champion and ultimately is given the position described in the title. Thompson discusses another version of this Indian tale in *Folktale* 327. It has also been the subject of extensive analysis by B.V. Randall; see 'The Cinderella Theme in North-West Indian Folklore,' in *Indians of the Urban North West* ed M.W. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press 1949). See also Dimitry M. Segal 'The Connection between the Semantics and the Formal Structure of a Text,' in *Mythology* ed Pierre Miranda (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972).

6 It should not surprise us that this tale has such connections. As an international folk tale (type 449), it was long ago linked with Arthurian material by G.L. Kittredge in *Arthur and Gorlagon*, vol 8 of *Harvard Studies and Notes on Philology and Literature* (1903; New York: Haskell House 1966).

7 *From Ritual to Romance* (1920; New York: Anchor 1957) 23

8 'The Origin of the Grail Legend,' in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1959) 279

9 It did not surprise the original tellers and listeners either. In another variant of the tale, Arthur's wife tells the champion, 'the forfeit you name may be the cause of your own death yet' O Suilleabhain *Folktales of Ireland* 108). The story is 'Art, King of Leinster.'

CHAPTER TWELVE

1 These definitions are taken from the *Standard College Dictionary* (Toronto: Longmans 1953).

2 I am referring to violence in individual combat. The son of the Queen of the Lonesome Island does defeat two armies but never fights an individual.

3 *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1944; Boston: Beacon 1955)

4 I would prefer to say that problems which *seem* weighty and difficult are easier to handle in the wonder tale, as they can become in reality if we return to them with the lightened emotional-spiritual view of the tale.

5 *Morphology of the North American Indian Folktale* Folklore Fellows Communication 195 (Helsinki 1964) 122n

6 For a thorough investigation of this aspect of fate, see Heinrich Zimmer's analysis of 'Abu Kasim's Slippers' in *King and the Corpse* 9–25.

APPENDIX A

1 *Morphology of the North American Indian Folktale* 53–4

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The World of the Irish Wonder Tale

ELLIOTT B. GOSE, JR

Fairy tales are a rich element of childhood in many cultures around the world. But in Ireland, where they are known as wonder tales, these stories of magic and enchantment are not restricted to young audiences; Irish wonder tales are told to adults.

So that the modern reader can fully appreciate them, Gose provides an interdisciplinary overview. He identifies a number of approaches – psychological, anthropological, structural, comparative, and typological. He briefly retells eleven tales and after each applies to it the approach that best clarifies its meaning.

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Only in the last hundred years have Irish wonder tales been written down. Gose compares their primitive characteristics with Celtic, Egyptian, and North American Indian myths. All share the motifs of initiation, transformation, and apotheosis; the animistic view they reflect is still relevant today.

ELLIOTT B. GOSE, JR is professor of English at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of *Imagination Indulged: The Irrational in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* and *The Transformation Process in Joyce's 'Ulysses,'* and is currently working on a study of classic children's animal fantasy tales.

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